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THE LIFE OF JESUS

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Essays and Criticism

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CINNAMON AND ANGELICA

THE LIFE OF
JESUS

By

J. MIDDLETON MURRY

1889 –

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PREFACE

I DO not propose to offer an apology for this book. I wrote it because I needed to write it. The time had come when it had become urgent upon me to make up my mind about Jesus. For reasons which concern myself alone I desired, if I could, to make him wholly *real* to myself.

The Jesus who is presented in these pages is simply the Jesus who is real to me – the Jesus in whose real existence I can, and in whom I do, *believe*. Because I desired to present him clearly, not only have I excluded, without warning or apology, incidents in the familiar story which I hold to be apocryphal, but I have put aside many sayings and incidents which I believe to be wholly authentic because to include them would obscure the narrative. My aim has been simply to establish a point of view from which the profound and astonishing unity of the life and teaching of Jesus can be grasped, and my hope is that those who can accept this point of view will find that the authentic sayings and incidents which I have omitted will fall naturally into place without exposition of mine.

For more than a century able minds have been at work trying to re-create the Jesus of history. I owe them much; yet the debt is less than I imagined it would be when I began this book. I quickly found that there was no consensus of critical opinion save on the few points which I had already estab-

lished for myself, namely, the priority of Mark's Gospel, the fact that it had been used by Matthew and Luke in the composition of their Gospels, and the impossibility of regarding the Fourth Gospel as historical. Outside this narrow territory I was surprised to find a welter of conflicting opinions, among which my own appeared to have as good a right to existence as another's. After a time, indeed, it occurred to me that it might have a better right than some. My training as a literary critic might be the equivalent of the more specialized training of the professor of divinity.

For much of my life has been spent in the effort to understand men of genius. And Jesus was above all else a man of genius. Of course there are many to whom he was above all else a supernatural being – a God. I cannot share that belief because I do not know what it means. But it is perhaps worth pointing out that those who truly hold it are themselves compelled to some such inquiry and effort at re-creation as I have attempted. For to hold the Catholic Faith that Jesus was very God means also to believe that he was very Man; and to believe this is to believe that his life upon this earth must have come to pass in one way alone. No fiat of Omnipotence can contrive that a single event should happen in different ways at the same moment. Therefore the effort of a century of critical research to re-create Jesus the man should receive at least the sympathetic attention of those who do verily believe in the God

of the Catholic Faith. It is a matter for pity and regret that it has been but rarely given.

Yet it is a matter for more pity and deeper regret that those earnest Christians who have given it should have been left with a sense of the emptiness, even of the sacrilege, of some of the Higher Criticism. From my own experience I well understand, and heartily sympathize with, the simple Christian who cries: 'They have taken away my Master, and I know not where they have laid him.' I confess that not a little advanced criticism of the Gospel narratives repels me as a man, and irritates me as a critic, by its assumption that Jesus was an ordinary sort of man. Criticism of this kind seems never to pause to think the obvious thought that if Jesus had been an ordinary sort of man, it would not now, nineteen hundred years after his death, be striving to prove that he was.

The Germans, as they have achieved some of the greatest victories in this field, have committed some of the worst excesses. But the taint is to be found in English criticism also. The offenders are circumspect; but sometimes one catches an unmistakable glimpse of *le bout de l'oreille qui perce*. I cannot forget two recent books: in one of which an eminent English theologian described Jesus, on his lonely and terrible journey to Jerusalem to die for mankind, as 'a fanatic'; in the other a Bishop of the Church of England declared that 'Jesus added nothing to human thought.' It seems to me that I

might fairly claim to be as good a Christian – though indeed I make no claim to the title – as such learned and orthodox expositors of the Faith. I do at least sincerely believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the wisest and the bravest, therefore the greatest, man who has lived upon this earth. Let that belief be my credentials: perhaps they are no worse than orthodoxy.

I will not vex my readers with an account of the various conceptions of the historical Jesus which have been put forward during the last hundred years. The conception of him as a man of genius is, however, conspicuous by its absence. Even Renan, whose life of Jesus is, for all its shortcomings, of an altogether higher order than any other, condescends to Jesus as a village *illuminé*. And in more recent years, when controversy has raged over what is called the eschatological interpretation of Jesus, spurious dilemmas have been created (it seems to me) mainly by the refusal to acknowledge that the nature of Jesus was altogether richer and more creative than his hard-and-fast interpreters are able to conceive.

Jesus was, of course, more, much more, than a man of genius. To the creative imagination of the great man of genius was added in him the power to live and die for his vision of things to come. Therefore the concept of the man of genius cannot be wholly adequate to his reality; but it is at least relevant to the author of sayings and parables that have

haunted the souls of men for nineteen hundred years; and it absolves us from accepting those adamantine and unreal dilemmas with which the more ruthless critics delight to demonstrate their prowess.

Yet even here I am anxious not to be misunderstood. Jesus is more than a teacher of an ultimate wisdom. Jesus was a teacher who died to save men who would not listen to his teaching. No other teacher has done that. And that sets him above and apart from all other teachers. It does not mean, as some may hold, that he added to the wisdom of the teacher the blindness of a fanatic. The combination is unthinkable and impossible. It means that to the wisdom of the perfect teacher in him was added the love of the perfect brother. There have perhaps been others as wise as Jesus, but none have had his love. Therefore there have been none so wise. To be wise and love – this is beyond all wisdom.

No one can understand Jesus who does not understand his teaching; but no one can understand his teaching who does not understand his life and death. The teaching without the life, the life without the teaching – these are incomprehensible. Because Jesus taught Life itself – not how to live – but Life. In the words of the man who was in spirit, but not in fact, his beloved disciple, who understood once and for all time the eternal significance of his Master, Jesus 'came that we might have life and have it more

abundantly.' The old ways of approach to that life-giving stream are closed to many modern men. For these I write. We have to know him after the flesh. There is for us no other way. But to know him after the flesh is to know him after the spirit: for we shall find that he was, in very truth, the ineffable Word made Flesh.

THE life of Jesus of Nazareth with which this narrative is concerned commences with his baptism, at about the age of thirty, by John the Baptist. Of his life before that critical moment we know nothing save what his own words tell us, and what we may confidently deduce from them.

What we can thus establish or confidently conjecture concerning the birth, the childhood and the early manhood of Jesus is little enough; but it is of deep importance.

While he taught in the Temple in the last days before his arrest and crucifixion he put to his people this pregnant question:

'How can the Scribes say that the Messiah is David's son? For David himself, speaking in the Holy Spirit, said:

> "*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand,*
> *Until I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet.*"

David himself calls him "Lord." Then how can he be his son?'

Thus it is established, by Jesus' own words, that he was not descended of David's line; and it follows inexorably that the stories of Jesus' descent and birth in the gospels of Matthew and Luke have the beauty not of truth but of legend.

The birth in the manger at Bethlehem, the Star in the East, the visit of the Wise Men, are devoid of all historical reality. These wonderful things did not happen. What did happen was more wonderful.

To Joseph, a carpenter in the village of Nazareth in Galilee, and his wife Mary, a son was born. It is unlikely that there was anything extraordinary about him; men of commanding genius are seldom extraordinary children. His mother saw nothing very extraordinary in him: for she never believed in him. His father is an utterly shadowy figure; he is not even mentioned in the earliest Gospel of Mark; and it is even possible that the report that he was a carpenter may have been deduced from the fact that Jesus had been one. However that may be, it is evident that Joseph the father had passed out of Jesus' life at an early age. Probably he died while Jesus was a baby. We must conceive Jesus, during most of his childhood, as a fatherless little boy. He had four brothers, James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and at least two sisters. In what place he came among them, we cannot say; but it is more probable that he was among the youngest than among the eldest.

Though from his baptism onwards until his death there was a complete severance between Jesus and his family, it would be inhuman to conclude that the incompatibility reached back to his childhood. He may have been a lonely, certainly he was not an unhappy, little boy; he played, like any other little

boy, at dances and funerals in the market-place; and he watched, with a curious and wondering eye, the small doings of a poor household – the setting of dough to rise, the close sweeping of the floor for a lost shilling, the patching of a coat so threadbare that the piece of new cloth tore the old away. His mother must have been poor to a degree. In his after-life Jesus could pick out a poor widow from a crowd, and know as by instinct that the halfpenny she dropped into the Temple money-box was all she had.

In the material sense, and in that sense alone, the childhood of Jesus was meagre. He knew what it was to go hungry; and we may suppose that the thin sustenance of his early days was in part the cause of the two contradictory characteristics of his manhood – his power of physical endurance and his constitutional frailty. For many weeks after his baptism he starved in the desert, for many months of his 'ministry' he lived the hard life of a fugitive, and all was well; yet on the Cross he died within six hours, whereas the ordinary criminal frequently endured for two days. Much, incredibly much, of his final weakness must have been due to the incessant and ever-increasing demands made by his spirit on his body; but yet not all. A fundamental frailty there was, and it probably came from the rigours of his childhood.

Nevertheless, it was a full and happy childhood, and something more than these, or any, epithets

can convey. Jesus' childhood was of the utmost significance to him. He thought of it, in later years, as an age of completeness, and he felt that his life as a little boy had been fuller and truer than his life as a man, and that in growing up he had lost something infinitely precious that it was worth the whole world to regain. For that something he found many names: sometimes he called it the Kingdom of God, sometimes Life itself. It was a condition of security, of spontaneity, of freedom from all doubt and division. He never forgot it.

So he grew up to be a carpenter, doubtless a good one; for there is an instinctive completeness about the later man which makes us imagine him a good man of his hands – but delicate hands. He had learned the Law and the Prophets: none of the Scribes and Pharisees knew the Scriptures as he did, with the same easy creative mastery. He felt that he knew, and he did know, the authentic voice of God from among the many voices of his prophets. But against the adamantine Law, and the thousand rigid and trifling interpretations of the Tradition, he rebelled. If that was religion, he would have none of it.

Oft his time of rebellion we know absolutely nothing. What happened to him in the fateful years between twenty and thirty is hidden from us; we only know that he became what he was – the profoundest teacher, the bravest hero, the most loving man, that this world has ever known. What hap-

pened to make him this we shall imagine according to our conception of how the greatest men are made. One or two things we may say for certain. He plunged into the world: direct, first-hand experience of life, and more than village life, speaks in all his sayings. He suffered: he was bound to suffer. No man learns infinite love save through the infinite of suffering. And a third thing which is certain is that he sinned. No man was ever less of a humbug than Jesus. When he went out to be baptized by John, he went out to be baptized for 'the remission of his sins.' He was the last man on earth to seek such a baptism had he not been conscious of sin. No man despised mere ritual and empty ceremony more profoundly than he. He was baptized for his sins because he had sinned.

But sin is a vague word. The sins of a great man are not as the sins of a little one; and the most grievous sin of a sensitive man would be imperceptible to a callous conscience. Jesus' sins were the sins of a man of supreme spiritual genius, who knew and taught that the outward act was less significant than the inward attitude. To such a man an inward despair concerning the existence of God would be far more terrible than any lawless living in which the inward despair should find its utterance.

It would be foolish to speculate further on the nature of Jesus' sin. Enough that in his own conviction he had sinned; and that on the news of the appearance of John, preaching the imminent end of

the world and a baptism for the remission of sins, he went down from Nazareth to a desert place by the side of the Jordan to be baptized by him. He was then about thirty years old. At that age, and in that place, Jesus first enters the pages of history. With his baptism by John our real knowledge of him begins.

PART I

I

JOHN THE BAPTIST

THE Palestine of Jesus' manhood was in a condition of spiritual tension caused by the ineluctable advance of the Roman power. Against the dominion of the Greek Seleucids, two hundred years before, the Jewish nation, led by Judas Maccabæus, had victoriously asserted its independence and integrity. But now the intermittent aggressions of the Seleucids had given way to the slow and steady pressure of mightier Rome. Galilee was indeed still ruled, as a kind of native state, by a Græcized son of Herod the Great; but Judæa, and the holy city of Jerusalem, had now fallen under the direct control of a Roman procurator. The vision of an Israel triumphant in this world was fading fast.

The more vehemently were the thoughts of the pious Jew – and few Jews of Palestine were not, in some way or other, pious – turned towards the expectation of a miracle. It was half-spiritual, half-material. Something dim and majestic and terrible would happen: God's vicegerent, the Messiah, would come with power, at his coming the world would end, and a new world would begin with God himself for King. Thus God would deliver his chosen and confound their oppressors.

The expectation, though intense, was vague. But out of the mists of prophecy and foreboding certain

things showed clear. The last words of the last of the prophets, Malachi, had been: 'Before the dawning of the great and terrible Day of the Eternal, I will send you the prophet Elijah.' Thus it was fixed that Elijah would be the forerunner of the superhuman and awful figure of the Messiah, who should come to judge all the world.

But Elijah would come only after a period of chaos and tribulation. Such, at least, was Jesus' own expectation expressed in the words: 'Elijah comes first to restore all things' – to restore them from the chaos in which they were plunged. But whether the time of chaos and tribulation was that which the Jews were then enduring or some more terrible condition which was to befall them – who could say? A voice of authority was needed to declare these things – the voice of a prophet.

A prophet appeared. One John came out of the desert to declare that the great and terrible Day was indeed at hand, and that the way to escape the Wrath of God was to be baptized as a sign that a man's soul was cleansed from sin. John himself made no direct claim to be Elijah; but, if his words are truly reported, a claim to be Elijah was implicit in his declaration that he was the immediate forerunner of a Mightier One, a fierce and terrible Judge. In any case, even of those who believed in John, only some held him to be Elijah: the others believed simply that he was a prophet. And, above all, Jesus, who certainly believed in John, did not believe that John

was Elijah. He was to believe it afterwards, but much was to happen to him before that belief became possible, and necessary.

What Jesus went out to see in John the Baptist was a prophet.

And he saw a prophet, and he heard him proclaim that the great and terrible Day of the Eternal was at hand. A fierce gaunt man, clad in a rough camel-skin, who ate no food but what the stony place would yield him – wild honey and locusts, vermin of the desert – spoke vehemently of the imminent Wrath, and the Mighty One to come,

'Whose fan is in his hand, and he shall winnow his threshing-floor, and gather his wheat into his garner, and burn the chaff in the unquenchable fire.'

Yet that wrath and the judgment of that coming One might be escaped, by the baptism of remission of sins. Those who bore the mark of this new sacrament – for none had baptized a Jew before the coming of John – those who repented of their sins and were washed in the Jordan as a sign, as sheep go down to the stream and are washed and a new bright mark is set upon them by the shepherd – these should escape if their deeds were true to their mark of regeneration. These the coming One would spare.

John said grimly:

'A stronger than I comes after me, whose very sandal-thong I am not worthy to bend and unloose.

I baptize you with water; but he will baptize you with fire.'

The menace of that fiery trial struck fear into the hearts of some whose heads were proof against it. Pharisees, who believed that the roll of the prophets was long since closed, Sadducees, who scarcely believed in prophets at all, were among those who came out to see and remained to be terrified. Not many of either, for few of the Pharisees expected a new revelation, and few of the Sadducees desired one; but enough for John the Baptist to turn upon them with the withering words:

'Offspring of vipers! Who gave you the hint to flee from the wrath to come?'

'Offspring of vipers!' The name was to cling to them, and to be put into the mouth of Jesus himself, although his name for the Pharisees and his condemnation of them was other than John's. John's vision of them was his own, the vision of a desert anchorite who had seen the snakes gliding away before the oncoming fire.

Yet John baptized them, with a fierce word of warning, mistrustful of their repentance:

'Bring forth fruit worthy of repentance. And think not to say to yourselves: "We have Abraham for our father." I tell you God can take these stones and make them sons of Abraham. Already the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree which does not bear good fruit will be hewn down and burned.'

But the Pharisees and Sadducees who obeyed the

command of John to repent and be baptized were few. The Sadducees had made their peace with the world, and the Pharisees had made their peace with God. Were the Pharisees, who governed every act of their lives by the written and unwritten Law, to confess themselves sinners in need of repentance? They had dealt justly with God, they had pored over the books of his Law, they had squeezed the last drop of precept from them, in their agony to walk in his ways: therefore the Wrath to come, if it came, would find them unafraid. They were righteous men.

And in the deepest sense in which that uncongenial word 'righteous' has ever been used, the Pharisees *were* righteous men. They were not many – some six thousand in all the land – a confraternity of servants of God, members of a strict and narrow Church, such as Christianity itself has produced many times since then, and gloried in the creation; men who served the God they knew, in the way they knew. They dealt justly with their God, and expected justice from him. Doubtless they received it. For it was not the God whom they served who branded them for ever with the name of hypocrites. It was another God; and he, when they refused to repent at John the Baptist's summons, had not yet been born.

The sinners and the common folk, who knew that the Wrath could not leave them unscathed; the tax-gatherers and soldiers who sold themselves to the

alien power; the harlots who sold themselves to everybody – these obeyed John's summons. The men and women who had something to repent of – these repented. And they asked what they were to do. They had repented, they had been baptized, they had saved themselves from the Wrath, but what came next?

John himself hardly knew. What came next, for him the prophet, was the Mighty One and the Wrath and the End of all things. Against the glare of that impending consummation all human action showed grotesque and irrelevant. And John's own recorded words to his anxious converts have their tinge of futility.

The tax-gatherer said: 'What shall we do?'

He answered: 'Exact no more than is your due.'

The soldiers said: 'What shall *we* do?'

He answered: 'Do not be tyrannous; do not arrest people on false charges; be content with your pay.'

And to the common folk at large he said: 'Let the man with two shirts give one to him that has none; and the man who has food do likewise.'

John could think of nothing better to say. His words struck lukewarm, or positively chill, on souls wrought to white-heat by his vision of the End of All. He had need to be more than a prophet to have teaching adequate to such an apocalypse. In his words we still can hear, down the long whispering-gallery of the centuries, the faltering voice of one who sees surely timeless things, but is uncertain in the world

in time. When it came to the question what to do, during the sickening interspace while the End was not yet, he had no more to say than the Pharisees themselves. To do them justice they would have said more than he: they would at least have said to the soldier and the tax-gatherer: 'Leave your hireling service.'

But John had eyes, not for things that are, but only for things to come: and even those he could not see. The Mightier One was among the sinners whom he baptized, but he did not recognize him. He was not the first, nor yet the last of prophets, to be dazzled by his own vision, and blink bewildered at the world that is. That one among his crowd of sinners should be the Mightier One than he – that thought never entered his mind: for it was none other than the arduous, the all but unthinkable thought, that the timeless world and the world in time are one.

2

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

It was impossible that John should for one moment have conceived that the Mightier One was among the crowd that listened to him. Before we can approach towards an understanding of the true history of Jesus and his sublime achievement, we must put absolutely out of our minds the Christian doctrine that Jesus was, in his own lifetime, the Messiah. Jesus came to believe that he would be, and he was such a man that after-generations found it possible, nay necessary, to believe that he was. But all this was in the future. The real conviction that Jesus was the Messiah was only possible after he was dead. And at the time when Jesus listened to John the Baptist the thought was far from his own mind, and utterly inconceivable to another man's.

For the Messiah imagined in Jesus' day was not, not ever was to become, a living man among men. He was a transcendental and superhuman figure, at whose advent into the world the sun would be darkened and the heavens rolled up like a scroll. We have a glimpse of him in the Book of Daniel, in the figure of 'one like unto a Son of Man,' and one still more vivid in the Book of Revelation. There the Messiah has been, so to speak, Christianized; but essentially the Lamb of God in that book is the Messiah of the Jewish imagination in Jesus' day. No

living man could be the Messiah, for the Messiah did not belong to the order of humanity at all. Nor did Jesus ever come to believe that he *was* the Messiah; but only that he was to become the Messiah. The thought that a living man should become the Messiah was terribly hard even for Jesus – for the ordinary Jew it was impossible – but that a living man should *be* the Messiah was simply unthinkable.

This must be understood, for except we understand it, there is no understanding the life of Jesus. John the Baptist did not recognize and could not have recognized Jesus for the Messiah. Jesus was not what he was expecting; he was not expecting a man at all, but an ineffable Presence, at whose advent the End of the World would come. He looked for a sign, a sign of signs, far more intently than the Pharisees, for he knew that the End was at hand and they did not.

There was no sign. There was no voice from Heaven that John could hear, no cloud of glory that he might see, no dove descending that his eyes might follow. What happened to Jesus, as he came up out of the waters of Jordan, happened to him alone.

'As he came up out of the river *he* saw the heavens parted above him and the Spirit descending like a dove towards him; and he heard a voice sounding out of the heavens and saying:

"Thou art my beloved son: I have chosen thee."'

There were other versions of these words, of which one has been preferred to another by the Church of

after-times for reasons which would have seemed incomprehensible to Jesus. For these words were his words, in which months afterwards he sought to tell the nearest of his disciples of the strange happening to his soul. He must have tried one way and yet another to communicate to them this incredible and simple thing. At another time the words he gave to the voice were these:

'Thou art my beloved son: this day have I begotten thee.'

These are not words which conflict one with another, and are therefore to be preferred one to another. They tell, with equal truth, of the same ineffable happening. In the former it was the beatitude, in the latter the completeness, of rebirth which Jesus strove to communicate. And surely he did communicate these things, and surely all were true. This happening was a sudden birth, yet an unutterably blissful thing: something that was not he descended swiftly and softly upon his soul, as it were a dove, and brooded upon it. There was suddenness, happiness, peace and joy – peace and joy not his own, yet not of another than himself, in something that he was and was not. In some *one* therefore; and in the later days he spoke of what he knew: 'There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over the ninety and nine which need not repentance.'

For he had come to be baptized by John as a sinner, among a crowd of sinners. He had come as

more than a sinner, but as a sinner he had indeed come. Whatever this man was, he was the incarnation of honesty. He would have sought no baptism for the remission of sins, had he not been conscious of sin. He came out also to see and to hear a prophet; he would have seen him and heard him, but he would not have sought his baptism for no cause, and become one with the outward ritualists whom he so passionately condemned. In his later words, we hear beyond all doubt the voice of one who had known sin, and the consciousness of sin, and the joy in Heaven over the sinner that repenteth.

What he knew that day, as he prayed on the bank of the Jordan, and the Spirit rested on his soul like a dove, and the voice echoed within him, was that he was a son of God. It is hard to approach those words with candour and simplicity: for the sceptic they are meaningless, for the believer they have acquired a meaning utterly remote from the actual experience of Jesus on that day.

What he knew, on that day, with suddenness and peace and joy, was something about himself and something about God. That God existed this son of Israel had no doubt; but to believe that God exists and to know God are things different by the whole breadth of heaven. Jesus had sought to know God; he had sought to recognize him by his voice in the books of Law and the Prophets. He had turned aside from this accent, and clung to that. God was not in the earthquake nor the cloud nor the fire, but

in the still small voice. 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice': such was the voice he sought. And with what ardour and eagerness, with what exquisite discrimination he listened for it, those can judge who read the inspissated and tortured chapters of Hosea out of which Jesus plucked that jewel. Long before he came down from Nazareth to Jordan, he was a master of the Scriptures. So were the Pharisees and the interpreters of the Law, the Scribes. But Jesus' mastery of the Scriptures was of a totally different kind from theirs. It was a creative mastery. For in the Old Testament there is not one God, but many gods: from among them Jesus sought but one, one who should satisfy his own deep intuitive knowledge of what God must be – a God whom he could worship.

Jesus was such a man that the God whom he could worship must be the God whom he could love. The second Isaiah also had been, in part, such a man. But Jesus was wholly such a man. Therefore he was a rebel against the tradition of his race. He was the true child of his great nation in that he believed in one God; he was a rebel against it in that the one God in whom he could or would believe was a God whom he could love. It was a Promethean act: of rebellion and creation, and it changed the mind of man and the face of the world. There must have been the days, the years, when the rebellion against the tradition of his race, and against the Law itself, was a sheer nothingness: the time must have been

when he had forsaken the stern and awful God and found none other to take his place, a dark and terrible time when the One was silent and inscrutable before his questioning, and he himself was simply alone, or with the memory only of the one voice which was lovely and ineffably sweet among the many voices with which God had spoken of old.

He went down to John the Baptist, to see and to hear a new prophet, and to be baptized for the remission of his sins. But John's voice was the familiar voice of the stern and awful God; he belonged to the old time, to the Law and the Prophets. He had not the knowledge of God which Jesus sought, and because he knew what he sought, already possessed. Jesus made no mistake about John. In the after-months he spoke clearly concerning him:

'Verily I say unto you, Among men born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: but the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.'

John belonged to the old order and the old knowledge: he was shut out from the new.

This is not justice: but justice has no part in the mystery of creation. The new is born; and the old is cast away. John's baptism, like the blood on the doorposts of Israel in Egypt, was only a refuge from the Wrath to come. The Kingdom of God that Jesus discovered and created was other than that.

And it was discovered and created on that day when Jesus was baptized by John and went up out of the water. Then Jesus knew that the God whom he had sought existed, and that he and the God whom he had sought were one. Yet more than one, two in an ineffable relation of unity, so complete and so peaceful, so far beyond all that the intellect could comprehend of union between two, that there was but one human relation that would not wholly betray the truth. Father and Son. The Son had found his Father, and the Father his Son. 'For this my son was dead and is alive: he was lost and is found.'

In the Gospel of the Hebrews there is yet a third version of the voice which Jesus heard; it, no less than the others, is authentic. It reads:

'My son, in all the prophets did I await thee, that thou mightest come and I might rest in thee, for thou art my rest.'

None other than Jesus can have thought that thought or framed those words. The lonely God had longed for his son, for one who should know his secret heart, and pass beyond the terror and the lightning, the earthquake and the tempest, to the silence of the still small voice. All through the long history of Israel had he waited, and now his son was born to him, born to him by a rebirth of the son's own seeking, through a love which had followed the echoes of his voice through the prophets. The lonely God had heard their footsteps down the dread corridors as they came near, some so near that his

longing heart would burst to speak a word, but none had passed the veil and the word had not been spoken. But now one had not faltered: his son was born, and the lonely God had rest.

3

THE TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS

The lonely God had rest; but not his new-born son. The Spirit drove Jesus away into the desert, and Satan tempted him.

The Spirit drove him away into the desert.

No one can define what is the Spirit. Jesus himself never did. But it is not difficult to know what Jesus meant by it, when he said that the Spirit descended upon him, and then drove him away into the desert. The Spirit was that plenary addition to himself that came to him from his experience of God, the power not himself which entered into him through his sudden knowledge of God. The Holy Spirit is not mysterious; it has been made mysterious for us by a name now become ghostly and strange – the Holy Ghost. There was nothing ghostly about it; it was simply that part or power of God which abided with Jesus, or any man, after his union with God. It was not God, for God was other than himself; it was not himself, for it was other than he had been. It was the God who was henceforward in himself.

Nor is it mysterious that he should have called it the Spirit. The prophets before him had known something of the experience, and called it by the word. The Spirit of the Eternal One had been upon

Isaiah. And Jesus, who had had the words of Isaiah sounding lifelong in his soul, had the name for the power of God which had come upon him. He recognized it for what it was. He knew the Spirit had been poured out upon him.

That was a sign of the End. The prophet Joel had declared in the name of the Eternal One as a sign of the End: 'Behold I will pour out my spirit on all flesh.' And it had been poured out on Jesus. If on him, why not on all men? But all men did not know that they were sons of God. But if he knew himself the son of God, why should not all men know themselves God's sons? It was not impossible. They had only to do as he himself had done. Surely it was not impossible. What man has done, man can do again. No, it was not impossible; for he had done it. All men would become sons of God, as he had become; and the Spirit would be poured out on all flesh, as it had been poured on him.

It was blindingly simple. The End was indeed at hand. But what an End! Not the Wrath, but the Love of God to come. All men were to be the sons of God. No, not to be; they were his sons already, if they would only know it. All men were to know themselves the sons of God. The world, all life, would be changed in the twinkling of an eye, as it had been changed for him. Yes, the Kingdom of God was upon them, now, at this very moment of time: and the secret of the Kingdom was that there was no King: only a Father.

He must go and proclaim it – the wonderful news. No human lips had ever such a message for mankind. He must go now, now. There was not a moment to be lost. He had but to speak, and men would hear; he had but to say the simple words 'Our – Father,' and all would be revealed to them.

But the Spirit drove him away into the desert: and the Devil tempted him. He stayed alone in the desert many days, eating only what the desert gave. Wild beasts cried around him in the night. His soul grew faint with wrestling with the burden of his knowledge and his purpose, till the night became as the day, and the day as the night.

The Spirit of Evil came to him, and said:

'What is this that you are going to do? To found the Kingdom of God? It cannot be. It is a dream. Kingdoms are of the earth. You are strong, you are wise. There has been no man like you. Build not in dreams. Come, see what I shall show you.'

And the Spirit of Evil took him up into a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the earth and their glory, and said to him:

'All these shall be yours, if you will bow down and worship me.'

The Kingdom of God, was it a dream? And the Kingdom of Earth, was that the real? Jesus the King of the Jews, Emperor of the World? Ah, but the price!

If God's kingdom were a dream, God was not:

he had known God. The Son had found the Father, and the Father the Son. That was no dream.

Jesus answered:

'Away, Satan! For it is written: "Thou shalt worship the Eternal One, thy God. Him only shalt thou serve." '

The Spirit of Evil departed. But he returned and said:

'What is this that you are going to do? To tell men the wonderful news that they are God's sons? Wonderful news, indeed. God's sons! It is a dream. Look at them. *My* sons!'

Jesus said:

'They are God's sons, if they would but know it.'

The Spirit of Evil said:

'And how do *you* know it?'

Jesus said:

'Because I know that I am a man like them, and because I know that I am the son of God.'

The Spirit of Evil said:

'And how do you know *that*?'

Jesus said:

'I know.'

The Spirit of Evil said:

'Are you sure?'

Night after night, in the lonely place, the Spirit of Evil whispered to him: 'Are you sure? Still sure?' Night after night, in the lonely place, Jesus answered: 'I am sure.'

And after forty days and forty nights, when Jesus was sick with hunger and faint with wrestling, the Spirit of Evil whispered to him:

'Hungry! The Son of God? Faint! The Son of God? Still sure?'

Jesus was silent.

Then the Spirit of Evil whispered the word he had feared: 'Prove it!'

Ah, why should he not prove it and be filled? Why should he not prove it and know? Why should he not prove it and have rest?

His weary mind began again. The Son of God. Wonderful, terrible knowledge! Why should he not prove it? Was it not his duty to prove it? When all his purpose, all his life to be, rested on this sole foundation. Surely he *must* prove it now, before it was too late? Why not?

Not from a Book, but from his own depths, he fetched the victory.

'If I seek to prove that I am that which I know myself to be, I betray my knowledge, my God and myself. I cannot prove that God is, and is my Father, because I know. I cannot prove that I am his son, because I know. What I have known, I know, now and for ever.'

The victory was won; but Jesus stood pale, as a dead man.

The Spirit of Evil came forward and said:

'It is written: "He hath put thee in charge of his angels to guard thee wherever thou goest, lest thou

shouldst strike thy foot against a stone." If thou art the son of God, throw thyself down.'

Jesus answered: 'It is also written: "I must not prove the Eternal, my God."'

The word of victory was spoken. The Spirit of Evil, who is the Spirit that for ever denies, left him and never returned.

4

THE WONDERFUL NEWS

Jesus stayed there in the desert where he was, having conquered the last onslaught of the old enemy, waiting for the signal for his work to begin.

The signal came. Suddenly John the Baptist's course was ended. He had called upon a king to repent, and declared aloud that the marriage of Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, with Herodias, his stepbrother's wife, was a forbidden thing. Therefore Herod had sent his men to lay hold of John, and had flung him into prison in his strong town of Machærus, on the edge of the Arabian desert. The news of John the Baptist's arrest came to Jesus.

The forerunner had run his course. He had done his work: he had proclaimed the imminent coming of the End, baptized Jesus into the knowledge what the End was to be – not the Wrath, but the Love of God.

But why had Jesus waited till then? For two reasons, we believe. First, that he knew his message was, for all its outward likeness – 'Turn and be changed, for the Kingdom of God is upon you' – profoundly different from John's. And Jesus would not appear in open difference with John. John had been his master. At all times in his life Jesus insisted upon the greatness of John: he was more than

a prophet; among men born of women there had been none greater than he. Jesus felt that in some sort he owed it to John that he himself was what he was. He owed John a loyalty, which he was to show most exquisitely in his dealings with John's masterless and perturbed disciples. While John was still preaching his message, Jesus would refrain from preaching his.

But the message of Jesus was urgent and precious. Was he to wait indefinitely? No: for he had a presentiment that John would run his course. Jesus felt that for all his greatness John was but his destined forerunner. John would end and he would begin, and John's ending would be the sign for his beginning. There could be no confusion between them: a new message, a new prophet.

At the sign Jesus went up from the desert into Galilee, proclaiming the wonderful news of God and saying:

'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the wonderful news.'

And it was wonderful news. None more wonderful has ever been poured into the ears of longing and mistrustful men; and none more incredible. Very few of the millions who in some sort or other have believed in Jesus, have believed in his message; very few have cared to understand it. To most of those who would have cared the way to understanding has been barred by their belief in Jesus as God, as

the Son of God in some peculiar and transcendental sense.

This he was not, nor ever claimed to be. He believed he was the son of God, in precisely the same sense as he believed all men to be sons of God. The difference between him and other men, in his eyes, was simply this: that he knew he was the son of God, while they did not. Therefore he was God's first-born, or first-reborn, son. But even that had no part in his message. His wonderful news was simply this: that all men were God's sons, if they would but become his sons, and that he was sent to show them the way.

That was the strange and simple message of Jesus, the 'wonderful news' that he went to proclaim through Galilee. The rest of the message was John's message: that the time was fulfilled and the End was at hand. But on Jesus' lips that message, though in word the same as John's, was utterly transformed, by the simple fact of his knowledge that men were God's sons, and God their Father. It was not therefore Wrath, but Love, to come, that men had to expect; not the grim sentence of a Judge, but the joyful welcome of a Father.

That this knowledge and this bliss might be theirs, men had only to repent. But 'repent' is a Christian word; it is not a word of Jesus. The significance of Jesus' own word has been impoverished. Man had not to repent, but to turn and be changed, as Jesus himself had turned and been changed. They would

be reborn, and the world would be reborn. All men would know themselves for God's sons, and Him for their Father, and the Kingdom of God would be, there and then, at the very moment that he spoke. The only time that was needed was time for the wonderful news to be spread abroad. It would spread swift as fire in stubble. All that men had to do was to believe it.

This was, and is, and ever will be, the wonderful news of Jesus. Men have seldom believed in it, though they have believed in things concerning him far more incredible than this. But to believe as Jesus meant the word 'to believe' has been given to few. Jesus said that men had only to believe the wonderful news for it to be true; they had only to believe that they were sons of God to be sons of God; they had only to believe that God was their Father, to find Him their Father. That was all: only to believe. But for Jesus to believe was to know.

With this wonderful news Jesus went to Capernaum, on the shore of the lake of Galilee. Round about that city he proclaimed his message; and crowds flocked to him. Sometimes he spoke to them inland, sometimes by the side of the lake. The substance of what he said was this:

'The Kingdom of God is coming, now. To enter it you must become a son of God. To become a son of God, you must believe you are a son of God. To believe you are a son of God means you must act like

a son of God. To act like a son of God means many things. But chief of all it means this: that you must trust your Father utterly, and behave to every man as to a beloved brother, knowing that he also is a son of God.'

Whether before he went to Capernaum he had gone back to Nazareth it is hard to say. But there is no reason why we should not trust Matthew's word that he did return to his native place: Luke seems to have heard the same story. But he quickly left it. In his own family his message was not acceptable: it never was. It is one of the many strange ironies in the history of the Church that Jesus' brother James, whose only recorded activity in Jesus' lifetime was an attempt to take him as a madman, should emerge after Jesus' death as the head of the Church in Jerusalem. The sceptic might suspect James' good faith, and see in him one ready to exploit a relationship of flesh and blood where relation of the spirit there was none. But there is no need. James seems to have been a religious fanatic. Perhaps, as the Gospel of the Hebrews relates, Jesus' family had gone out to be baptized by John and were followers of his. They knew Jesus' message was in essence a negation of John's: it seemed to them almost a blasphemy, and they rejected it and its bearer. During all his lifetime the cleavage between Jesus and his family was absolute.

So Jesus made his way to Capernaum. Capernaum, not Nazareth, became his home, or what little

home he thenceforward possessed. He went there to find old friends of his to accept his message and help him in proclaiming it – men who had known him when they followed John together: Simon and Andrew, James and John, and perhaps Philip of Bethsaida hard by. The story of the fourth gospel squares with the words of Simon Peter in the Acts in declaring that their acquaintance with him had begun when he was baptized by John. It conflicts with nothing in Mark's story, but rather fits perfectly with it. For Mark's story, as the oldest tradition and the newest criticism unite in asserting, is built up from Peter's dictated memories. The memories are of one who had known Jesus at his baptism, lost sight of him for a mysterious interspace, and been sought out by him again on the shores of the Lake at the beginning of his active ministry.

We may imagine that, when Jesus parted from them, he to go into the desert, they to return to their homes, he had told them that he might have need of them. He did not know. When the imperious Spirit drove him apart, its purpose might have been that he should become a desert anchorite like John, prophesying the End and preaching repentance far from the haunts of men. But he had proved his knowledge and his message to be far different. He had wonderful news to give, and he must seek men out to give it them.

He sought out first his friends of Capernaum.

As he was walking by the side of the Lake, he saw Simon and Andrew putting out a seine. Both were in the boat, close in shore, one rowing, the other paying out the net from the stern. Jesus called to them: 'Come here, and follow me: I will make you fishers of men.' And they left their boat and nets and followed him.

A little way farther on he saw James and John, with their father Zebedee, sitting in their boat mending their nets. He called them also; and they left their father in the boat, with their hired men, and followed behind him.

Then Jesus, with his four followers, returned to Capernaum where they lived, and Jesus stayed at the house of Simon and Andrew. Henceforward their house was his home.

On the following Sabbath he went into the synagogue, and when the reading of the Law was ended, he spoke. These, or like these, were the words he said:

'Think not that I am come to undo the Law or the Prophets. I am not come to undo, but to complete them. For verily I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not a mark or a comma shall be taken from the Law, until everything has been accomplished. Whoever therefore shall undo one of these smallest commandments, and teach men so to do, shall be the smallest in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever shall do them, and teach men so to do, shall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

'For I say unto you: that unless your holiness is more than the holiness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

'You have heard that it was said to the men of old: "Thou shalt do no murder. But whoever shall do murder shall suffer the judgement."

'But I say to you: that every man who is angry with his brother shall suffer the judgment. Whoever shall say to his brother Raka! shall be haled before the council; and whoever shall say to him Fool! shall be worthy of the undying fire.

'Therefore if you are bringing your offering to the altar in Jerusalem, and you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there and then before the altar, and go away to be reconciled first to your brother, and then return and bring your offering.

'You have heard that it was said: "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

'But I say to you: that every man who looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

'Therefore, if your eye cause you to offend, pluck it out and cast it away. It is better that one of your members be destroyed, and not your whole body cast into the undying fire. And if your hand cause you to offend, cut it off, and cast it away. It is better that one of your members be destroyed

and not your whole body go into the undying fire.

'Again, you have heard that it was said to the men of old: "Thou shalt not swear falsely; but thou shalt fulfil thy oaths to God."

'But I say to you: swear not at all. Neither by heaven, because it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, because it is the footstool of his feet; nor by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great king. And do not swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair of it black or white. But let your speech be: Yes, yes, no, no. What is more than these comes of evil.

'You have heard that it was said: "An eye for an eye" and "A tooth for a tooth."

'But I say to you: Do not resist evil. Rather, whoever smites you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And whoever seeks to go to law with you, to take your shirt, let him have your cloak also. If a man compels you to carry a mile for him, carry two. Give to the man that asks, and from the man who would borrow from you, do not turn away.

'You have heard that it was said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy."

'But I say to you: Love your enemies, and pray for them that do you harm. That thus ye may become sons of your Father; for he makes his sun to rise upon good men and bad, and his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust. If you love those who

love you, what reward have you? Do not the tax-gatherers do the same? Do not the pagans do the same?

'Do you therefore be perfect, as your Father in Heaven is perfect.'

5

THE MAN IN THE SYNAGOGUE

The people were astonished at his teaching, for he spoke as one who himself had direct authority from God, and not as the Scribes.

They might well be astonished. Not the Scribes, not Moses himself, had spoken so. 'You have heard that it was said. . . . But I say to you.' This was the voice of one who knew the will of God, and claimed it for his own. He declared that he came not to undo the Law, but to complete it: to complete the revelation of God's will that the Law contained. By thus completing the Law he shattered it, and the nation which was built upon it.

One man alone among his hearers knew what had happened. In the synagogue there was a man with an impure spirit, who cried out:

'What have we in common with you, Jesus of Nazareth? You have come to destroy us. I know who you are – the holy one of God.'

Jesus rebuked him: 'Be quiet, and come out of him!'

The impure spirit convulsed him, and shrieked, and came out of him.

Everybody was astounded, and they questioned each other:

'What is this?'

'A new teaching with authority!'

'He commands impure spirits.'

'Yes, and they obey him.'

The phrase – 'a man with an impure spirit' – is strange to a modern mind, but the reality is not. He was a man possessed by a power greater than himself, who did what he would not and spoke what he would not. For all such supersessions of the active and controlling personality in Jesus' day there was a single name and theory: the man was possessed by a spirit or dæmon. The spirit could be pure or impure, good or evil. By the pure spirit, which was the Spirit of God, a man was inspired and a prophet; by the impure spirit, which the the Spirit of Evil, he was simply possessed and mad. To distinguish between these spirits was as difficult then as it is to-day. We do not know how to distinguish between the genius and the madman in themselves: the only test we have is that which Jesus himself applied to others and claimed for himself: 'By their works you shall know them.'

The decision was easy for the Pharisee, who was convinced that the day of the prophets was past. For him all spirits were impure spirits. It was his sentence upon Jesus, and upon John the Baptist before him. In the eyes of the organized religion of their day, John before, and Jesus after, had each a spirit indeed, but it was a spirit of evil.

That has always been the judgment of organized religion upon those of its children who claimed to be directly inspired by God: for the position of

organized religion has always been the same. Because it is religion, God has revealed himself directly to men; because it is organized, that direct revelation can never be renewed. A new revelation cannot be suffered, for it strikes direct at the heart of authority. It is, and must be condemned as, subversive and heretical. Therefore it is held to be the inspiration of the Evil One, and is punished as such.

When therefore we read of Jesus' great power over impure spirits and that those possessed of impure spirits were the first to recognize him, we must remember that deep was calling to deep. The madman is greeting the genius, the genius soothing the madman, on the extremest confines of human personality. A man whose body has broken under the burden of spiritual knowledge is responding to, and being strengthened by, a man whose body could bear the burden. One who had passed beyond the awful conflict between spirit and flesh, and had been made one again in a rebirth of which the ordinary mind has no imagination, was recognized by others who were lost in the conflict from which he had emerged triumphant and calm; and by contact with him, they were sometimes momentarily, sometimes permanently renewed.

Jesus himself seems to have believed in the direct opposition of the impure and the Holy Spirit, and that he cast out the impure spirit by the Holy Spirit. There is the danger of thinking this a simple or crude belief. In fact, there is no other way of

simply stating the mysterious truth: but it is one which we must seize in its truth, not its statement, for it lies near to the core of the life of Jesus.

Jesus, when he came up out of the water, after being baptized for the remission of his sins, felt that the Holy Spirit descended upon him. Suddenly he was one with God, in an ineffably sweet reunion of son and father, and a great peace and a great power came to him. That was, in Jesus' own experience, the victory of the Holy Spirit over the Spirit of Evil. Yet what followed? He was driven out by the Holy Spirit into the desert, and the Spirit of Evil returned, a thousand times more potent and insidious, to beset him.

Jesus described his agony in the desert exactly in the after-months:

'When the unclean spirit leaves the man, it wanders through the waterless places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then it says: "I will return to my house whence I came out," and coming it finds it empty and swept and adorned. Then it goes and takes with it seven spirits worse than itself, and enters and dwells there; and the last state of the man is worse than the first.'

But Jesus, out of the profundities of his own soul, had fetched the strength to banish these awful visitants for ever. The Holy Spirit, that power or part of God which abode with him after his reunion with God, was completely victorious.

Thus for Jesus the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of

Evil stood to each other in the terribly close relation of eternal opposites. They recognized each other, and the human soul was their grim battle-ground. In the victory of one, the other found his opportunity, until the final consummation of the triumph of the Holy Spirit.

When the man with the unclean spirit cried out in the synagogue, 'Have you come to destroy us?' it was not a devil calling to the destroyer of devils. He was a little prophet acknowledging a mighty one. He was a man speaking, who saw and felt more deeply than the rest what Jesus' teaching meant, who recognized its source and inspiration and was rebellious against it. He was a Jew, crying out on behalf of Jewry, to warn it of a danger it could not see.

'What have we in common with you, Jesus of Nazareth? You have come to destroy us. I know who you are – the holy one of God.'

He knew; the others did not. On such a man Jesus had power, and used it. But the prophetic voice of Jewry had spoken, through a forgotten prophet, words that were not forgotten.

6

THE HEALING OF THE LEPER

HAVING left the synagogue, Jesus with his four followers returned to the house of Simon and Andrew. The mother of Simon's wife lay sick of a fever. When they told Jesus of this, he went to her where she lay, and took her by the hand and raised her up. Then the fever left her, and she looked after them all.

The news of what he had done to the madman in the synagogue had already sped through the town and beyond: to this was added the news of his healing the mother of Simon's wife. In the cool of the evening, when the sun was set, they began to bring to the house all in the town who were sick, or afflicted with impure spirits; and the whole population of the town was gathered together at the door. And Jesus healed many of those that were sick, and cast out many impure spirits. And he would not allow those with the impure spirits to speak because they knew him.

What these words mean we know. These madmen and possessed would have cried out, like the man in the synagogue:

'What have we in common with you, Jesus of Nazareth? You have come to destroy us. We know who you are – the holy one of God.'

The others would likewise have recognized him,

and the Holy Spirit in him, and cried out against his compulsion, and revealed his purpose – to destroy the Law and the nation. It may be that the man in the synagogue had first revealed it to Jesus himself, and that, when he spoke with authority in the synagogue, he himself did not know that, simply by being what he was, he had come to bring not peace but a sword, or that his wonderful news was a message of catastrophe. The revelation may have struck him with dismay; he could not bear to hear it. It may be that the mere proclamation of himself as God's holy one, as though some peculiar sanctity attached to him alone, offended him as cutting at the root of his whole message. For either, and perhaps for both, of these reasons he exerted his power over the inspired madmen before they could speak.

Much had happened to him on this day. He had come into conflict with the world that is. The voice of the madman had revealed to him the nature of his purpose; and the thronging of his door had shown him that it was as a worker of miracles, not as the teacher of the Kingdom of God, that the world of men would follow him.

Therefore very early in the morning while it was still quite dark, he rose and left the house secretly, and went out of the city to a remote place. There he prayed. He needed a renewal of strength from communion with his Father to pursue the road that had suddenly opened up before him. How should he go forward? He found his peace with his decision.

When Simon and the others awoke and found him gone, they went in search of him. When they came upon him, they said to him:

'Everybody is looking for you.'

Jesus said: 'Let us go somewhere else – into the villages round about – so that I can proclaim the message there. For that is the reason why I came out of the desert.'

The message, therefore, was his decision; not miracles, or what men thought miracles. Quietings of overwrought souls, yes, lest they should again reveal a purpose which he could not admit, or claim for him a peculiar dignity which he refused. But no more healings of the sick. He must keep his message pure. The message, bright and undimmed: that was all in all.

'So,' says Mark, 'he went, proclaiming the message in the synagogues, and casting out impure spirits, through all Galilee.' There was to be, and there was, no healing of the sick.

But the resolve could not be wholly kept. Once on that journey through Galilee, Jesus could not refuse. A leper had faith enough in him to speak so that he could not refuse. He came towards Jesus, and fell down on his knees and besought him to heal him.

'If only you will,' he cried, 'you can cleanse me.'

The words are memorable; they are the words of perfect faith in Jesus' power. Not to say the word

to such a man was impossible. And Jesus' reply is more memorable still.

His bowels were moved with compassion for the man: he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said: 'I will: be cleansed.'

All that Jesus could do, he did. If the power to heal indeed lay in him, as the leper believed, then the word must be said. To such faith he could deny nothing that lay in his power to give. What he gave was not healing, but the word 'I will'; and he gave more: he stretched out his hand and touched the unclean body.

The leprosy left it, and the man was cleansed.

But Jesus was afraid of what he had done. He had only spoken a word his heart could not refuse. The man's faith had healed him, not Jesus' word. But how could the man know what Jesus knew, or how could the multitude distinguish? All unwilling, driven by the compassion of his heart, Jesus had stepped on the dangerous path once more. He withdrew his foot as though he had been stung.

He drove the man away immediately; but before he had gone he charged him angrily:

'Take care you say nothing of this to a soul. Simply go and show yourself to the priest, and take the offering Moses commanded to be given for your cleansing.'

But it was in vain. When the man had gone, he began to spread all manner of reports, and to tell the story everywhere.

Therefore Jesus could no more enter any town openly, but had to remain in remote places outside the towns. Even so, the people came from all sides to seek him.

7

THE HEALING OF THE PALSIED MAN

When after many days he re-entered Capernaum, the news that he was in the house was quickly spread abroad, and a crowd gathered at the house, so that it was impossible to keep clear a passage to the door. While Jesus was speaking the word of the Kingdom, there appeared a number of men bringing to him a palsied man on a stretcher borne by four bearers. When they found they could not carry their burden into the house to him, because of the press of the people, they climbed on top of the house and dismantled the roof above where he was, and, having made a hole, lowered through it the stretcher with the palsied man upon it.

Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the palsied man: 'My son, your sins are forgiven.'

Among those who were sitting within the house, listening to Jesus, were certain Scribes. When they heard what he said to the palsied man, they murmured in their hearts: 'Why does this man say such things? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins save One?'

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that they were murmuring thus within themselves, and he said to them:

'Why do you murmur thus in your hearts? For which is really easier: to say, "Your sins are for-

given," or to say, "Rise, pick up your stretcher, and walk about"? But in order that you may learn that a Man has power to forgive sins on earth – '

He stopped, then turned to the palsied man:

'I say to you, pick up your stretcher, and go to your own house.'

The man rose up, and picked up his stretcher, and walked out before them all.

They were astonished, and praised God and said, 'We never saw anything like this.'

That this thing happened, and that it happened in the way that Mark recorded it, we do not doubt. Nor is there cause to attempt 'an explanation' of it. It is impossible to set limits to the power of faith where there is an active human will to collaborate. We moderns can with difficulty conceive a world wherein faith is active. But faith was one of the prime elements in the world in which Jesus lived. Between that world and ours is all the vast difference which lies between a world which expects 'miracles' and a world which does not. And nothing seems more certain than that within certain realms true and indubitable expectation can produce a 'miracle.'

The history of Jesus of Nazareth is built upon a prodigious act of faith which can never be repeated. Jesus believed himself to be the son of God. Such a belief is scarcely imaginable by our minds; yet, by an effort, we can imagine it. He believed, moreover, that having come to the knowledge that he was a son

of God, it was impossible for him to do anything save the will of his Father. Whatever Jesus willed, God willed. This belief gave him a scarcely conceivable sense of power and certainty; if we desire to conceive it – and we must make the effort, in order to understand him – we must take these two certain things into our reckoning: that he built his whole life upon this belief, and that his life changed the history of the world. After Jesus lived and died in it, the world was never the same again. A new and unknown spiritual energy entered into the process of human life. It is not exhausted; so far as one can see it never will be exhausted; and we, for our part, believe it is only now entering upon a phase of plenary power. Only when the certainty that Jesus was but a man is freely and fully acknowledged will the full strength of his energy of soul be liberated for mankind.

But let that be. We are concerned with his reality, not with our dreams. This man believed, it was a noonday certainty for him, that what he willed as God's son, God also willed. But God did not will 'miracles.' That is certain. No one who has eyes to read the meanings of the Temptation in the Wilderness, which is Jesus' own account of his final passing into secure and unshakable knowledge of his immediate relation to God, can doubt that the victory was won by Jesus' profound realization that it was contrary to the will of God that he should work signs and wonders. To prove that he was what he was, by

performing prodigies, was treachery and blasphemy. 'Get thee behind me, Satan.'

It is not by a simple rationalistic assumption, that we reject prodigies from the historical story of Jesus. Jesus, and God himself, through his son, had rejected them beforehand. He must not put the Eternal to the proof. Therefore, there are no prodigies in the story of Jesus. It is true that there could not be. But to regard his history thus is to be condemned never to see it for what it was. Jesus believed that he could work prodigies; he believed that he could have convinced men of the truth of his message by signs and tokens; but he *knew* that if he were to do so, he would be betraying God and himself. By working prodigies as God's son, he would once more sever himself from the Father.

And this is no *a priori* assertion. It is a certainty that leaps forth to meet the eye in the story of The Temptation in the Wilderness.

It is absolutely confirmed by Jesus' own words: 'This generation seeketh after a sign, and no sign shall be given it,' words that were altered from their true and primitive form in Mark to a prophecy of the very prodigies he was renouncing.

But the healings of the sick and the curing of madmen were 'miracles.' We may call them that; but we had better call them healings simply in order that we may have clearly before us the fundamental and absolute distinction between them and the prodigies. There is no need to enter upon a learned

and abstruse discussion concerning what is 'miracle' and what is not. It is altogether irrelevant to this history of Jesus. The distinction is between a sign or a prodigy, which he must not perform, and a healing which many times he suffered himself, not gladly, to accomplish.

Healings were compelled from him, by acts of faith. When Jesus saw in men who cried to be cured, faith that his word would cure them, he spoke the word. He could not deny it. He could not deny it, because he loved, and more, because faith was what he was asking from men. Therefore he suffered men to heal themselves by faith in him. Yet even so, as the story of the palsied man shows plainly, the words he preferred to speak were words of healing of the soul. 'Your sins are forgiven.' The word of bodily healing was only wrung from him by the protests of the Scribes. He knew how easily, how inevitably, these words of his would cause him to be regarded as a worker of miracles; and how fatally his work would be distorted and encumbered. He trod the dangerous path warily. He pacified overwrought minds, he suffered himself to speak the word to those 'whose faith had made them whole'; and in more than one crisis when there was no choice for it but to prove the truth of his own spiritual authority he spoke the word of healing before a concourse of people. Where a man's faith had done the work, there Jesus spoke the word.

These were not prodigies: neither to Jesus, nor

to us, nor to the men of his day. The gospels tell of many prodigies; but they tell also that after these prodigies had been performed, the religious Jews still asked for a sign, and Jesus still declared that no sign should be given them. It is plain as day that the prodigies were not performed, but invented by a credulous after-generation. And again we need not seek a general definition of prodigy; the sufficient definition arises clearly from the story of Jesus himself. A prodigy was some strange and extraordinary happening that should compel men to believe in him and his message. Jesus performed no sign that could compel men to believe in him. We know that he could not. But that is not very important. What is important is that he *would* not.

8

THE PREACHING OF THE KINGDOM

He went out from Capernaum to the shore of the Lake, and the crowd came to him, and he taught them. It was his message that he preached: That the time was come, that the Kingdom of God was at hand, and that all men could enter into it by knowing themselves sons of God, and returning to their Father.

Modern minds have tried to draw an absolute distinction between Jesus' teaching and his preaching: and have declared that since he believed that the Kingdom would come suddenly upon men, he could not have taught a universal morality to men. Life was to be changed; therefore he could not have taught men what to do in life. He taught only a provisional 'morality of the interim' – something wholly dependent on his proclamation of the End, which has lost its validity since the End did not come.

It is wrong. The foundation of all Jesus' preaching and teaching was single and simple; it was his knowledge that he was a son of God and that all men might be sons of God like him. It was because he knew that, that he knew that the End was coming. What he had to do was to show men how to become God's sons. His teaching was not a 'morality of the interim,' but the most fundamental

part of his message. He taught men what they must do to make themselves sons of God, and so bring to pass the end of the dispensation and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Nor is it possible to declare that this was a dream. The way to become a son of God which Jesus taught has never been tried. Men have avoided it as they would avoid destruction, because they have felt that to follow Jesus was destruction; it meant the annihilation of organized society. Their instinct was true: it does mean that, and Jesus meant it to mean that. He preached anarchy, but an anarchy such that after a momentary chaos a new and more splendid, a new and ineffable, condition must begin.

No man can say that Jesus was wrong; those who have most deeply understood his thought have felt that he was right. They have felt that if men could follow his teaching, even for one single day, human life would be permanently changed, and not the mere temporal conditions of life, but human nature and the human consciousness.

There is that in the sheer and dizzy audacity of Jesus' thought which seems must for ever escape the minds both of the pure rationalist and the believer in Jesus' divinity. By the latter his anarchic words are rendered innocuous; the dynamic and explosive force is taken from them by regarding them as the words of a God. They thus become the language of an impossible ideal which, by the nature of their source, cannot be meant for the living lives of

ordinary men. The rationalist, who is as frequent in the Christian Church as he is out of it, having decided that Jesus was a humanitarian teacher who wanted to make men better, extorts from the reluctant texts an interpretation that Jesus conceived the Kingdom of God as a far-off divine event, or, finding it impossible to ignore the palpable fact that Jesus conceived the Kingdom of God as sudden and imminent, argues that his beliefs must be wholly interpreted in terms of the eschatology current in his day and have no meaning for our own.

To define and classify Jesus' thought is impossible; it has to be seized by an act of imagination from the vantage-point within. Then it becomes irrelevant to ask whether Jesus conceived the Kingdom of God as supernatural or natural, as timeless or in time. There is no answer to such questions, because Jesus' mind moved on a plane where such antitheses have no meaning. Men were to become sons of God: if they would become sons of God, they and all things would be changed. Not gently changed, in the sense that bad men would become good, but radically, catastrophically changed. A new kind of life, a new order of consciousness would begin, as different from that which men now have, as human life and human consciousness is different from animal life and animal consciousness. Between these, there is an abyss. Such an abyss mankind would have leaped when they became sons of God.

Apparently this thought is too hard for most men. It has been all but utterly lost from the Christian Church: inevitably, because it begins by what seems a deliberate invocation of catastrophe. No organization can possibly be built on the thought of catastrophic change. And where some shadow of the thought has endured, as in the beliefs of Second Adventists and the like, who are the lineal descendants of the primitive Christian community and as heretical as they were, it has remained as crude as the primitive Christian belief in the coming of the End. That was almost a parody of Jesus' thought, although it may well be that it was into such a form that Jesus first poured his own sublime meaning.

For what certainly emerges from his story is that no one, even of his nearest and dearest disciples, understood what Jesus meant when he spoke of the Kingdom of God. They were bewildered by his teaching. It is not unnatural: it is a mysterious teaching, and like all true mysteries it is both utterly simple and utterly unintelligible. The sting has been taken out of the mystery by the deification of Jesus, with its comfortable corollary that his ways are the ways of God and therefore past finding out. But with the magnificent and sustained effort of the nineteenth century to discover the historical Jesus, the mystery has returned. For men have found the Jesus of Nazareth cannot be made to fit their conceptions of an historical personality. Some of them have thrown up the effort to rediscover him in despair,

declaring that the mixture of truth and legend in his story is beyond elucidation; some have declared him a fiction; some have consciously and deliberately presented a contradictory figure, and avowed that human science can do no more.

But men have not yet asked themselves the simple question whether the man who spoke Jesus' words, the man who told the story of the Prodigal Son, the man who fired his followers with such belief in him that, after the extreme of defeat, they so passionately believed him victorious that they infected the whole world with their assurance – whether such a man could possibly fit their conceptions of an historical personality. Doubtless the simple question, if it occurred to them, was dismissed as dangerous. To admit the possibility that their conception of human personality would not fit Jesus of Nazareth was surely to admit that he might be divine.

Yet the dilemma was not absolute. The third road, the simple road, lay open, yet none would take it. The road that led to Jesus the man of genius. It is hard, very hard, for the modern mind to admit the conception of Jesus as the man of genius. He must have been simpler than ourselves, because he allowed himself to die in agony for what we know to be an illusion. There are illusions and illusions. There are things that are not, and things that are not yet. It takes a genius to conceive the things that are not yet; it takes more than a genius to die for them. Yet more than a genius is still a man.

Jesus taught, preached, expected, and knew the things that are not yet. Whether he conceived them as coming in time or out of it, we cannot know and he could not say. He saw, for he had known within himself, the change in kind that may overtake humanity, as it overtook the animal when the first tiny *homo sapiens* blinked at a new world. Then there was a change in kind and the birth of time; man, the time-measurer, had been flung up out of the vast. Before him time did not exist; he created it, and cast it backward like a net into the ocean of the timeless past. Jesus saw another change in kind. Was that to be a change in time or out of it? Neither, and both: for it was a change of the time-conceiving soul.

9

THE CHALLENGE TO THE LAW

As he was walking by the side of the Lake, he saw Levi, the son of Alphæus, sitting in his office collecting customs, and he said to him: 'Follow me!' Levi arose and followed him.

It had been the tax-gatherers who had listened to John the Baptist; so now Levi the tax-gatherer had listened to Jesus. Jesus had marked him among his eager hearers, and chosen him to make one of his band of closer followers. There were solid reasons why Jesus' message, like John the Baptist's, should have brought the tax-gatherers to his side.

The tax-gatherer was a social outcast. On the lips of the rigidly theocratic Pharisee, devoted to the Law and the Tradition, the word 'publican' was was practically a synonym for 'sinner'. Even when the tax-gatherer, like Levi in his office outside Capernaum, was collecting his dues not for the gentile power of Rome, but for the treasury of a Jewish Rajah, he was still in the eyes of a pious Jew the accomplice of a godless tyranny. In the mind of a Pharisee civil government had no right to exist. And the contempt felt for the tax-gatherer by the Pharisee, who believed that all government was summed up in the Law and all taxation in the Temple dues, was shared on more immediate and less lofty grounds by the ordinary man. At all times

and in all places the tax-gatherer has been an unpopular figure; in the oriental world, where the system of selling the taxes to the highest bidder and permitting him to make his profit at his will, has always obtained, he was detested; in theocratic Jewry he was, as it were, under a perpetual sentence of excommunication.

To such men John the Baptist's message that all men alike were sinners and must repent to flee the Wrath to come was a tonic to their self-esteem: they were no worse than those who scorned them. But Jesus' message was more: it made them sons of God; it set them indeed far above the Pharisees, for the Pharisees naturally refused to listen to a gospel which held of no account all their rigid and meticulous loyalty to the Law. The tax-gatherer who listened to Jesus' preaching straightway became a better man than the Pharisee who would not.

Tax-gathering was a profitable business even for the smaller fry. And Levi, when he gave up his post as customs-officer at Capernaum, could well afford to give a dinner in Jesus' honour. Besides, he was following a man who demanded of his followers that they should make the sacrifice of all their possessions. The dinner was Levi's farewell to the comfortable life. There were many gathered together in his house to dine with Jesus, many of Levi's friends, 'publicans and sinners' who had listened gladly to Jesus but were not prepared to take the plunge, and many of Jesus' closer followers.

Perhaps the Pharisees were really indignant at the joyful company; but to a genuine indignation was added the chance of sowing doubts and dissensions among Jesus' followers. For it was not to the Master that they addressed their question, but to his disciples. At Capernaum fishermen were not likely to be bosom friends with tax-gatherers.

'Why,' said the Pharisees to the fishermen, 'does he eat with tax-gatherers and sinners?'

And the fishermen did not know. It was a difficulty that would vanish away when they had grasped the secret of Jesus' message. They had not done that; they never would. But they believed in him: the Master would have the answer. And they took the question to him. The Master had the answer, and gave it.

'Those who are well have no need of a doctor; but those who are ill. I have come to call, not the righteous, but sinners.'

There were other replies of Jesus to the Pharisees of the same order as this one; but they have become so familiar to us that we can hardly realize their perfection. The simplest of men could not misunderstand them; nor the wisest add to them. Those two small and lucid sentences are alive. They have the character which Jesus demanded of his disciples when he sent them out to proclaim the message: they are 'wise as serpents and harmless as doves.' For even the swiftness of their irony is not so remarkable as the simplicity of their justice. They leave

everything to the Pharisees. It was for them to judge whether they were well and whether they were righteous. If they were sure of their health and their righteousness, why then it followed that Jesus was not for them. But if they were not . . .

The more one looks into those simple words, the more one finds in them. Above all else, the evidence of the Master of men. He is, one would think, on his defence; by a dozen simple words defence is transformed into an insidious and devastating attack. Yet hardly an attack: merely the serpent doubt set wandering for ever in the Scribes' paradise of certainty. They might well be wished all the joy of the worm, for the worm will do his kind.

Jesus, like John the Baptist, attracted to him social outcasts; unlike John, he did not fast. His days of deliberate fasting were over when he had won his victory in the Wilderness. Now that he had entered the world of men for his purpose, he lived as a man among men. What fasting he did, he did in secret when he went apart alone to commune with his Father. Of fasting in the sight of men there was none. His asceticism was of another order, and lay in his implicit faith in God. What the day brought forth, that he and his followers received gladly as their Father's gift. What the morrow should bring forth, was the care of the morrow. A bringer of joyful news could not but live joyfully.

But John's followers were ascetic like their absent master; and they were troubled by Jesus' freedom.

'Why,' they asked him, 'do your disciples not fast, whereas we do?'

Jesus answered:

'Can the sons of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? Surely, so long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. But the day will come when the bridegroom is taken from them; and then they shall fast, in that day.'

The beauty of that reply has been lost, and its authenticity questioned, only because it has been confused with his reply to the same question from the Pharisees. They are different answers to different men. And to prove it we need not point to the impossibility of the Pharisees, who scorned John the Baptist, joining with John's disciples in the attempt to embarrass Jesus. The questions came from different men, and were born of different minds. The masterless disciples of John were truly troubled; they were loyal to their imprisoned master, and fasted as he had done. Were they wrong?

The beautiful answer was for them alone. 'No, you are right,' Jesus said. 'The bridegroom has been taken from you. You have cause to be sad. If I too am taken, these friends of mine will fast, even as you. But I am here, and we are happy; and they cannot fast. You understand?'

They are words of tender sympathy with men whose devotion he understood and whose loyalty he

admired. They must not be offended in him. So he sent John's disciples away happy: not so the Pharisees.

For them, when they also asked, 'Why do your disciples not fast, whereas we do?' he had a different word, profound and searching.

'No one,' he said, 'patches a worn-out coat with a piece of new cloth; if he does, the new cloth pulls away the old, and the hole is made worse. And no one pours new wine into old wine-skins. If he does, the wine bursts the skins, and both skins and wine are lost. He puts new wine into new skins.'

Again, it is perfect. His message was new; how should he fit it to the old forms? It demanded forms new as itself. Those who would wear his new cloth, must throw their old clothes away; those who would drink his new wine, must find new wine-skins for it. Old or new? It was for them to choose; but for him there was no compromise.

With the Pharisees he touched fundamentals once more. But not with John's disciples. The fasting of John's disciples was their personal act of obedience and loyalty to their master; the fasting of the Pharisees was impersonal: a stone in the great edifice of Law and Tradition – the church of their righteousness. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus.*

Here was the issue. A personal knowledge of God's will set over against an impersonal knowledge of that will as declared ages ago to the men of old: the voice of God speaking directly and anew through

a living Man against the voice of God graven immutably upon stone: a new revelation against the old.

There was no compromise; there could be no compromise. Either Jesus must deny his knowledge, or the Pharisees abjure theirs. They could not. All that the Pharisee believed, all that his fathers had fought for, all that he lived by, was menaced with annihilation by Jesus' claim. If men were God's sons, and could know his will as a son knows his Father's, as it were through a deep call of blood to blood, then the Law was null and the Tradition nugatory. Therefore the Pharisees repelled the claim, and fought the man who made it. They were not villains, they were not fools, they were not – save to the vision of the prophet of genius – even hypocrites: they were merely zealous Churchmen, with the virtues and the vices that have ever belonged to devoted sons of a religious tradition.

Now they sensed the enemy and watched him. If fasting was nothing to him, could the Sabbath be more? The Sabbath – the divine rest directly ordained by God – would he break that?

On a Sabbath day they saw him and his disciples making their way through the cornfields, and as they walked his disciples plucked the ears of corn and ate them.

The Pharisees came forward and said: 'See, they are doing what it is forbidden to do on the Sabbath.'

He answered: 'Have you never read what David

did when he had need, and was hungry, both he and his men? How he went into the house of the Lord when Abiathar was high-priest and ate the sacred bread, which it is forbidden to any man to eat except the priests, and how he even gave it to his men?'

What defence was that to the Pharisee? This carpenter of Nazareth claimed the royal privilege of David in his extremity! They had but to let this heretic speak: out of his own mouth he would surely be condemned.

And he spoke again:

'Or have you not read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and are without offence? But if you knew what this means, "I desire love and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the guiltless.'

What was this for a defence? The carpenter of Nazareth claimed for himself the privilege of the priests in the Temple! And was the solitary word of Hosea to overthrow the very ordinance of God? Was love of God to abrogate God's Law? How could it be love of God, when love of God consisted in keeping his commandments? That a man, simply by claiming that he loved God, might be free to break God's Law, was anarchy, sacrilege, blasphemy. Let the heretic speak: he could but go deeper into the mire.

He spoke again:

'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for

the Sabbath. Therefore man is lord also of the Sabbath.'

He had spoken it: a word that they could not, and would not, forget: nor the generations after them.

They were silent, and he and his disciples passed on.

But Jesus' mind was full. He had flung out his challenge and his vindication; he could no other. But would men understand, would even his own disciples understand, that this freedom that he claimed came solely from a knowledge of God? Freedom without that knowledge was licence and sin. He had done what he had done because he knew himself God's son, more closely bound to Him than by any law: and any son of God, who knew himself God's son, might do the same. But not otherwise. He must make it plain.

As they went along he saw a man working on the Sabbath. He called to him:

'Man, if you truly know what you are doing, you are blessed; but if you do not know, then you are accursed and a breaker of the Law.'

Those words of Jesus are not in the canonical text; they come from the *Codex Bezæ*. They are visibly authentic, and they express with perfect clarity a fundamental part of Jesus' teaching. The man who knows God is above the Law; the man who is ignorant of God is bound by it, for to know God is to be so deeply one with Him that a man's will is God's will. Spontaneously, in every thought

and act, he expresses God: God is realized only through man.

When Jesus returned to Capernaum, he went into the synagogue. He knew that the Pharisees would be there: for the service of the synagogue was precious to the Pharisee. It was the centre of his living religion. The synagogue, the place set apart for the loving study of God's Law, was the creation of the Pharisee, and the citadel of his faith. Therefore, when Jesus entered it, he knew he was entering upon another trial of strength, among men zealous in the service of the synagogue. He had come to destroy them.

There was a man there with a withered hand. The Pharisees watched what Jesus would do.

He said to the man: 'Come forward into the middle.' The man stood there.

Jesus turned to the Pharisees and said:

'Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or to do evil: to save life or to destroy it?'

And they were silent.

Jesus spoke again:

'Which man among you having a sheep, if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? And how much more than a sheep is a man?'

They were silent. Then Jesus looked round upon them in anger, stung by their sullen silence, and said to the man:

'Stretch out your hand!'

He stretched it out, and it was restored.

According to Mark's narrative, the man had made no appeal to Jesus. And it is probable that he did not. More than the healing of a withered hand was at stake. What seems to be the truth is that the Pharisees, knowing that the man desired to be healed by Jesus and believed that he could be, had brought him to the synagogue and forbidden him, on pain of Sabbath-breaking, to appeal.

Certainly the stage was set, the challenge prepared by the Pharisees. Jesus accepted it, and by his words to the Pharisees lifted it to the level of ultimate things. It was no longer a question of to heal or not to heal, to keep or not to keep the Sabbath. It was one conception of right against another. Both were phrased in the same words: to do the will of God. What then *was* the will of God? Which of them, Jesus or the Pharisee, knew it? Was it that men should do good, or that they should keep the Law?

For Jesus the answer was clear. The will of God was that a man should do good, irrespective of the Law. If by breaking the Law, he did good, then it was proved that the will of God was that the Law should be broken.

It was proved: the man with the hand made whole stood in the midst of the synagogue.

But it was not proved for the Pharisees. If they had no answer on their lips at the moment, they would find one soon: since the Law was broken, it was not from God that Jesus had his power to heal,

but from the Devil. Meanwhile they had an answer in their hearts. They immediately left the synagogue and took counsel with the officials of Herod Antipas how they might destroy Jesus.

10

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

Meanwhile the report of Jesus' doings had spread far and wide. It had reached Jerusalem, it had reached his family in Nazareth. He was proclaiming that men were God's sons, he was forgiving sins, he had openly declared himself above the Law.

We know little indeed of Jesus' family, but we know enough of his brother James from Paul's letter to the Galatians to see that he at least was a pious and fanatical legalist; and there is one strange glimpse of him in the early father, Hegesippus, which reveals him as an unshaven, unwashen 'holy man' of the East, who may well have learned his exorbitant asceticism from following John the Baptist. A vision of Jesus after death seems to have brought him into the early Church, in which he quickly gained a position of supreme authority in virtue of his relation to Jesus. He was the stubborn opponent of Paul's mission to the Gentiles, and he became an early martyr. From this we may fairly picture him as an ascetic and superstitious Jew, to whom not the abrogation, but the reduplication of the Law would have been the good news.

He and his brothers were horrified at the report of Jesus, whom they had barely seen since they went down together to be baptized by John. Jesus had departed alone into the desert, and when he had

returned to Nazareth it had been only for a moment. An impassable gulf had yawned between them, so that Jesus had left Nazareth for Capernaum immediately. The gladness of his good news and the gloom of their fanatical asceticism could not exist together. He left his home for ever and made a new one for himself in Capernaum.

But now he had broken out into impious action and blasphemous claims. The disgrace to the devout and rigid family of Nazareth was intolerable. Man was lord of the Sabbath! Jesus was mad. People said so, and the mother and the brothers of Jesus agreed. Now that he had appeared once more at Capernaum and crowds were listening to him again, they had the chance to save him from himself and their own name from ignominy. With this righteous purpose they left Nazareth and came to Capernaum.

Jesus had returned to Simon's house. There he was thronged with people, so that he and his disciples had neither time nor space to eat.

Scribes had been sent down from Jerusalem to counteract his influence and turn the people from him. It was his power as a healer of the demented and the conscience-stricken that they had to combat. This was his chief renown: as a healer of afflicted souls, in the height and breadth of the phrase. They could not deny that he healed them; but they denied absolutely that he healed by the Spirit and power of God. It was the Spirit of Evil that dwelt within him,

they said and truly believed. 'He casts out dæmons by the power of the Prince of dæmons.'

They had no choice. To have admitted that the Spirit of God was upon him was impossible. The Spirit of God could not inhabit a breaker of God's Law. Yet the souls were healed, the dæmons were cast out: therefore they were cast out by the Spirit of Evil.

The Scribes were not dishonest men; but they had their God, their Revelation, and their Law. A new revelation was to them unthinkable, as it has always been to the defenders of a Church and a Tradition. When a man comes forward claiming to be the vehicle of a new revelation, the defenders of a Church and a Tradition have always said the same: 'He has Beelzebub.'

Jesus heard of their denunciation and called them into the house to speak with him. He said to them:

'How *can* Satan cast out Satan? For if a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot endure; and if a house is divided against itself, that house will not last. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is risen against himself and is divided. His end is come.

'And if I cast out evil spirits by the Spirit of Evil, by whom do your sons cast them out? They shall be your judges.

'But if I cast out evil spirits by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God is come upon you unawares.

'And in truth no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder it, except he has first bound the strong man: then he will plunder his house.

'Either call the tree good because its fruits are good; or call the tree rotten because its fruits are rotten: for the tree is known by its fruits.

'Therefore I say to you: "The sons of men shall be forgiven all their sins, and all the blasphemies which they shall utter. But whoever shall blaspheme against the Spirit of God shall never be forgiven. He is guilty of an everlasting sin." '

The mysterious sin against the Holy Ghost is not mysterious at all. But it is terrible. It is to call the source of good, evil. On this simple knowledge that good must come from good, Jesus' whole answer rests. It was good that sick souls should be healed. Therefore it could not be the work of the Evil One, for it is not in the power of evil to do good.

It sounds a simple faith. But few men have dared to hold it. It is based on an utterly clear spiritual intuition. If a man cannot absolutely trust his own knowledge of what is good, it is no faith for him. It was no faith for the Pharisee, who needed the Law to live by. What man needs to live by, that becomes his truth, and his God. To the Pharisee Jesus, therefore, to Jesus the Pharisee, was the enemy of God. To the Pharisee Jesus, to Jesus the Pharisee, committed the unforgivable sin. Jesus denied God's Law; they denied his visible presence.

It has been said that Jesus was unjust to the Phari-

sees. In the conflict of eternal opposites neither justice nor injustice can be done. The Pharisees were not unjust to Jesus. It was not justice which would have taught the Pharisees to recognize the visible presence of God; it was not justice which made Jesus turn at the last with 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'; it was love. How could the servants of a just God understand the son of a loving one, or he them? But in the name of God one murdered, and the other forgave. That is the difference. Jesus could not understand what was less, the Pharisee what was more, than himself. Those are both misunderstandings; but only one is divine.

And Jesus' anger was divine. He turned fiercely on the Scribes:

'But how *can* you speak what is good, when you are evil? For the mouth speaks out of the heart's overflow. The good man from his store of good utters good things; and the evil man from his store of evil utters evil things. I say to you: at the Day of Judgment men will be called to account for every idle word they say. For by your words you will be justified and by your words condemned.'

'Prove your claim,' said the Scribes and Pharisees. 'If it is not the Spirit of Evil that works in you, but the Spirit of God, prove it. Show us a sign.'

It was not unreasonable. After all, the casting out of dæmons was no sign for them. Their own sons cast out dæmons: Jesus himself had said so. But

their sons did not break the Law; they did not claim, like Jesus, to be above the Law. And Jesus' healings were no signs to them: they had seen them, and they had seen things like them before. They asked for a real sign, a prodigy to compel them to assent to Jesus' claim to be above the Law. Till then, the sufficient sign to them was that he broke the Law.

Jesus answered:

'It is an evil and adulterous generation that demands a sign; and a sign shall not be given it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the Judgment with this generation and shall condemn it. For they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold! a greater than Jonah is here. The Queen of the South shall rise up in the Judgment with this generation and shall condemn it. For she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold! a greater than Solomon is here.'

The quality of his message was the only sign; there was no other. His power over sick souls might be to himself a sign that God was with him: it was not so to them. He knew it, and did not appeal to it. The voice of God, the accent of truth, in his message was the only sign. They could not hear it. They heard only the words: 'A greater than Jonah! A greater than Solomon!' More blasphemy! Truly he had Beelzebub. And they went away.

Jesus turned to his disciples, squatting on the floor about him, and began to speak to them con-

cerning evil spirits and the Spirit of Evil. For him it was in the Scribes; for them, it was in him. He would tell them of the power of the Spirit of Evil; he had known it in himself.

His mother and brothers arrived. They stood outside the house, calling him to come out to them. Doubtless he heard the familiar voices crying: 'Yes, we know he is mad: we have come to take him away.'

He paid no heed, but went on speaking to his disciples, spread in a circle round him.

Someone came in and said:

'Do you not hear your mother and your brothers outside, calling to you?'

Jesus said: 'Who are my mother and my brothers?'

Then he swept his glance over the circle of his listeners, and said:

'These are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God, he is my brother, and my sister, and my mother.'

The one message, in its simplest form. The old family was no more; the new family was the brotherhood of the sons of God; and the sons of God were those who did their Father's will.

Then he went on to tell his followers how, when the Spirit of Evil was driven out from a man, it returned to him with sevenfold force. He was speaking out of the depths of his own knowledge, learned in the Wilderness.

'When the unclean spirit leaves the man, it wanders

through the waterless places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then it says: "I will return to my house whence I came out." And coming, it finds it empty and swept and adorned. Then it goes and takes to itself seven spirits worse than itself, and enters and dwells there; and the last state of the man is worse than the first.'

Jesus was speaking of the experience of rebirth, warning and strengthening his hearers, by telling them of the trials they must expect. It was not an arid discussion of lunatic relapses, nor an unconvincing parable concerning an evil generation. Until they were wholly possessed by the Spirit of God, all men were possessed, more or less, by the Spirit of Evil. It was against the barren moment when the light has been, and is no more, that he was warning them. He was giving them some of the wisdom he had learned, and the strength he had gained in the Wilderness, the barren and dry place that was for him the very home of the Spirit of Evil.

It went home to one of his hearers. A woman lifted her voice and cried:

'Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the breasts which thou hast sucked!'

He answered:

'Nay: blessed are those who listen to the word of God and keep it.'

Much had happened on that day: the religion of his country, the religion to which he belonged, had finally cast him out. It had passed its judgment: he

was a son, not of God, but of the Devil. And his mother and his brothers had acquiesced. They had condemned him in milder terms, saying merely that he was mad; but they had condemned him with the same condemnation. Jesus knew it. 'He that is not with me,' he said on that day to his disciples, 'is against me; and he that gathers not with me, scatters.'

On the same day, at the same moment, the ties between him and his earthly country, between him and his earthly family, were snapped. His mother and his brothers had gone over to the enemy. Jesus accepted it, and by his own word made the severance absolute. From henceforth he had, and he recognized, no mother, nor brother, nor sister: he had no kin save his fellow-sons of God.

II

THE BOAT AND THE MOUNTAIN

How long it took Jesus to reach this point of excommunication by the religion of his people there is no telling. In Mark's story the movement towards a breach with the Pharisees and the synagogue appears swift indeed; it may well have been so. The astounding claim of Jesus to act by the immediate authority of God was one that must have brought the piety of the Law quickly about his ears; and an outraged Church has never been slow to appeal to the secular arm.

Nevertheless, it is possible that the swiftness of Mark's story is illusory. He has no dates. To convey the sense of lapsing time without them is the high achievement of the skilled writer. Mark was not that. He is the naïve recorder of vivid and crucial incidents as the aged mind of Simon Peter remembered them. Months may have separated events that in his narrative appear to follow day by day. No one can tell how long elapsed between the beginning of Jesus' preaching and his final sacrifice; it may be that the story of a three years' ministry contained and elaborated in the Fourth Gospel rests on a real reminiscence. It does not conflict with Mark's story, which is simply the record of what Jesus' chief disciple remembered in his old age of the happenings while Jesus and he were together.

The record is, as we should expect it to be in such a case, vivid and detailed at the opening of the ministry and vivid and detailed at the end. For the rest it is scattered incidents remembered through a haze of apotheosis. But even as it stands it tells of one gap of unknown length when Jesus sent his disciples out to proclaim his message while he himself remained in hiding, and of another while he journeyed alone through the far north.

Whether, as the author of the Fourth Gospel relates, Jesus made other Passover journeys to Jerusalem before that which ended in the Passion, it is impossible to decide. But if he did, they were unimportant, or Mark's story would be different. The fact that Jesus had friends in Bethany implies nothing in this regard, for many came from Judæa and Jerusalem to seek out the prophet of Galilee, and he surely found friends and followers among them. But that the ministry of Jesus lasted longer than the immediate impression of Mark's Gospel would suggest is probable. Apart from the flight to the north, and the unknown interval while Jesus sent out his disciples, which Mark himself is fain to fill by his story of the death of the Baptist, there was a ministry at Bethsaida of which we have but the faintest record, and one at Chorazin of which we have no record at all. Three years would not be too long, and one year seems too short, for the events that are presupposed in the authentic sayings of Jesus.

In spite of this, we may believe that Mark gives a substantially true impression of the swiftness of the movement to the breach of Jesus with the Pharisees and the religion of the synagogue. It did not take long for Jesus to become a virtual exile from Galilee. After he had uttered his final defiance of the Law by healing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, the background of Mark's picture changes. It is not the deliberate change of a conscious historian; it is made unconsciously, and the gospel narratives are so familiar that we too are unconscious of it. But it is there.

Immediately after his statement that the Pharisees and Herodians plotted together how they might destroy Jesus, Mark says that he and his disciples retired to the shore of the Lake. There is no reason to suppose that the synagogue where the withered hand was healed was in Capernaum. It is simply *a* synagogue. Before that his disciples had been plucking corn from the fields.

Behind these vague indications lies an inland journey. Jesus had been 'preaching in synagogues throughout the whole of Galilee,' and with him had been Simon and Andrew, James and John, no longer fishermen of the Lake, for they had thrown up their calling at his summons and become fishers of men on the dry land.

Now at one moment a new background appears. Jesus is excluded from the synagogues: in Mark's story he preaches or teaches but once in a synagogue

again. He and his four disciples retreat to the lakeside. There appear suddenly a boat, and a mountain which is called *the* mountain. To that mountain Jesus calls the men he wants, and out of these he chooses eight more close followers, bringing the number to twelve. The mountain, the lakeside, hurried and weary voyages from one side to the other, a chosen twelve, public parables and private explanations – all these things enter Mark's story together, not in a precise chronological order, but at the same time. One can imagine Simon Peter in his old age telling the incidents at scattered moments to John Mark. 'When did that happen, sir?' says John Mark. 'Just after the Pharisees had joined with Herod's men,' says Peter. And John Mark makes a note of it; but when he comes to put his tablets in order, he finds that many things happened 'just after' the Pharisees joined with Herod's men. But which happened after which, and why, he does not know.

Such to the eye of the literary critic is Mark's Gospel – the main historical divisions are there, and strongly marked; and the main psychological sequence has authenticity stamped upon it. *Ce n'est pas ainsi qu'on invente.* But the details of the sequence are sometimes confused. The situation shapes roughly thus:

Jesus and his four disciples have been driven from Galilee. He gives to those who wish to follow him the word to meet him at a mountain on the other

side of the lake, in the wild country that may have formed part of the territory of Gergasa, a Greek city of the Decapolis. There he is in a sort of no-man's-land, immune from the machinations of the Pharisees and free from fears of Herod Antipas. But if he is to proclaim his message at all, he must proclaim it in Galilee. The boat that takes him to the mountain will bring him back to the shore of Galilee. So from time to time he makes descents upon the Galilean shore, preaching and teaching from the boat that escape may be easy the moment the alarm is given. He does not know how far the civil power is supporting the Pharisees; but he has, with the precedent of John before him, good reason to fear the worst. The main desire of the Pharisees is that he should be kept from contaminating Galilee. Scribes from Jerusalem are on the watch to meet him, to confute him when he appears and work against his influence in his absence. His descents upon the shore of Galilee are continually thwarted, though on one occasion he manages to make his way inland on a futile journey to his native place. Finally on another attempt to preach in Galilee his retreat to the lakeside and the boat is cut off, and he is forced to flee northward by land to the territories of Tyre and Sidon, and to regain 'the other side' by a long and devious journey.

Such is, roughly, the new background of the story. Jesus' home is no longer Simon's house at Capernaum, but the mountain on the other

side. There he gathers his chosen, and instructs his disciples, so that they may carry his message abroad, in places where his own presence is forbidden.

12

THE CALL OF THE TWELVE

The call of the twelve in Mark's story follows immediately after the declaration of war upon Jesus and the retreat to the shore of the lake. 'He went into the mountain,' says Mark, 'and summoned the men he wanted, and they went to him; and he appointed twelve to be with him, and to send to proclaim the Kingdom and have authority to cast out dæmons.' The process is clear. Out of a larger number whom he summoned a more intimate twelve were chosen. Of these Simon and Andrew, James and John had already been close in his company; Levi the son of Alphæus also, if Matthew is the same man as he. But there is no solid reason for supposing that Levi and Matthew are the same man. They were both tax-gatherers, it is true; but Jesus had much dealing with tax-gatherers and sinners. And the fact that Mark records 'the call' of Levi does not necessarily mean that that Levi was afterwards appointed one of the Twelve.

For the appointment of the Twelve seems to have been a solemn act. Previous to this moment Jesus had had followers and disciples, but not apostles. By their appointment Simon and Andrew, James and John entered into a new condition. They and the eight others now became delegates-elect of Jesus' authority. Before this moment Jesus had not needed

to delegate his authority, either to proclaim his Kingdom or to cast out dæmons. He had been able to exercise it himself in person. But now the possibility was gone. Galilee was closed against him.

That the new apostles were twelve points likewise to a solemn act. They were twelve for the twelve tribes of Israel. Their function was to proclaim the Kingdom to the whole of Jewry. 'You will not,' he was to say to them when he finally sent them out, 'have covered the twelve tribes of Israel before the Son of Man be come.' The Son of Man was not Jesus himself, he was the superhuman and mysterious Judge who should establish the Kingdom of God, of which Jesus knew alike the imminence and the secret.

The time for the going forth of the Twelve was not yet. They knew the imminence of the Kingdom of God, but they did not know the secret of it. But Jesus would teach them. The secret of the Kingdom was more important to his message than the coming of it: for the secret was wholly his own. John had known of the coming; but Jesus had discovered the secret.

The disciples and the Twelve are henceforward distinct. But not because the secret was imparted to the Twelve alone. The secret was imparted to all – to the crowds when Jesus had the chance of speaking to them, to the disciples who followed him to the mountain, and to the chosen Twelve among them. The Twelve were distinct solely because they were

constantly 'to be with him' and were to be sent forth clothed with his authority. But there were many disciples beside. Mark speaks of 'those about him, together with the Twelve.' There were disciples and there were apostles in the mountain with him: but both were disciples. Both shared the secret of the Kingdom, if they had ears to hear it.

Of all the Twelve, Simon and James and John were nearest to him. Among the Twelve they were the chief, and their intimacy with Jesus and what kind of intimacy it was is revealed by the names he gave them. The giving of these names – nicknames, in truth – was not a solemn act. The names themselves are not solemn. Quite obviously, in the case of James and John, 'the sons of Thunder,' the name was the creation of a smiling affection. They were to Jesus lovable and slightly absurd, and the more dear for their tinge of absurdity. The precious glimpse of them vouchsafed by Luke's Gospel affords the perfect explanation of the meaning of their name. They would have loved nothing more dearly than to be permitted to call down fire and brimstone on the Samaritan village that refused a lodging to their Master. They thought of him as the great King, of themselves as his stern viceroys, dealing doom to those who would not obey. It was very hard for them to understand the secret of the Kingdom: and to the end they could not.

Simon was called Peter, 'the Rock.' So much has been built upon that rock that it may seem subver-

sive to suggest that Simon's name, 'the Rock,' was also given with a smile, and that it meant Simon the Wobbler. However, we believe that it was so given and did mean this. Something is known of Simon's character, not merely from the record of the gospels, but from St. Paul's letter to the Galatians also. He among all the twelve apostles shows most real across the backward and abysm of time; he alone is truly human to us and not merely the shadow of a name like Andrew, or the creature of imagination, like the beloved disciple of the Fourth Gospel. And if, as we are persuaded, the Gospel of Mark is substantially the reminiscences of Simon in his old age, we know, in truth, a great deal about him. But for Simon himself nothing need ever have been known of his threefold denial of his Master; that he should have told the story speaks eloquently for the inward nobility of the man. He was weak and he was strong. In him, indeed, the spirit was eager and the flesh was weak. He alone of the Twelve had moments of the inward vision of what his Master was. He verily saw things that flesh and blood did not reveal to him: he had spiritual insight.

His recognition of Jesus as Messiah, in the extreme of his earthly defeat, was an act of creative vision; so in the later days was his acceptance of the gentile Cornelius into the early Church. But Simon's courage was not wholly equal to his vision. After the former act he shrank from the thought of a suffering Messiah and incurred the fierce rebuke

of Jesus for 'thinking like a man and not like God'; after the latter, under the influence of fanatical James, he withdrew from the new ground he had boldly taken. Bold advance and fearful withdrawal was the way with Simon. He alone followed the captive Jesus into the high priest's courtyard; but there his courage failed. Great old, poor old Simon!

Yet chiefly great, and wholly lovable. This was a real and living man; and we do not wonder, as we come to realize him, that he was the first and nearest of Jesus' chosen men. He understood more of Jesus than the others; and he loved him more. If, as we believe, Mark's Gospel is substantially of Simon's telling, he alone has preserved the secret of the Kingdom: nothing touches it so nearly as the fourth chapter of Mark. But for that chapter the very essence of Jesus' teaching might have been lost. It was Simon too who first of the apostles saw the risen Jesus: and it is the first vision that matters. When one has seen, it is easy for others to see. But to be the first to see is to have plucked unaided, by the sheer force of a passionate love, victory from defeat.

But Simon was not firm as a rock, his greatness was of another kind. He saw greatly, loved greatly, but he could not maintain himself on the height. He was called Simon the Rock in loving irony. Jesus knew his man, and knowing him chose him for his nearest. Simon the Wobbler – but only Simon could touch the height from which he fell,

and to which he struggled back again. When Jesus called Simon the Rock there was no bitterness in his irony: when Paul spoke of 'the pillar of the church,' there was. Paul was a great man; Simon had only his moments of greatness: but the greatness of Simon in his great moments was nearer to the greatness of Jesus than Paul's ever was.

13

THE MYSTERY OF THE KINGDOM

And it is to Simon, who gave to Mark the memories from which he wrote his Gospel, that we owe our chief knowledge of Jesus' inmost teaching. It was Simon who remembered 'the mystery of the Kingdom of God.'

In this mystery Jesus instructed his chosen men. Perhaps they learned more from being with him than from his words. Yet we cannot distinguish between Jesus' life and Jesus' teaching: they were one. For the mystery of the Kingdom was the mystery of rebirth, and Jesus was reborn.

The apostles must learn the mystery, before they could proclaim the coming of the Kingdom, for through the mystery men would learn how they might enter into it. John the Baptist had said, 'Turn and be changed'; Jesus also said, 'Turn and be changed.' But how were men to change? John had baptized men; Jesus did not. Here, as always, he refused the sign. Signs were dangerous. Those who needed signs never knew the thing signified.

The secret of the Kingdom was the secret of the change in man by which he entered into it.

Jesus spoke it in parables. One day he came down from the mountain to the lake-shore of Galilee and spoke from the boat. Simon rested on his oars to listen. He listened well, did Simon; he never forgot.

The parables were all of the sowing and growing of seed. These were the essential parables; he cared to remember no others. These contained the secret.

'A sower went out to sow,' Jesus said. 'And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it. Some fell on the stony ground, where it had not much earth, and it sprang up immediately, because it had no depth of earth. And when the sun stood high, it was scorched, and because it had no root, it withered away. Some fell among thistles, and the thistles sprang up and choked it, and it bore no fruit. Other seed fell on good soil, and it sprang up and increased and bore fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundredfold. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'

'The Kingdom of God,' he said again, 'is as when a man casts seed upon the earth and sleeps by night and wakes by day; and the seed sprouts and grows tall – but how he knows not. Of her own self the earth bears fruit – first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. When the fruit is ready, then he sends in the reaper, because the harvest is come.'

Again he said:

'To what shall we compare the Kingdom of God? In what parable shall we put it? It is like a grain of mustard-seed, which when it is sown in the earth is smaller than all the seeds of earth; but when it is sown, it springs up and grows greater than all other herbs, and puts out great branches, so that the birds of the air may roost in the shade of it.'

What did they mean? The people wondered, and the disciples mused. The Kingdom of God like a seed – a mustard-seed? Jesus watched the uncomprehending faces, and felt lonely at heart. Could he speak more plainly? If they would know more, let them follow him to the mountain. There, if he could, he would tell them more. But if they had no ears to hear the still small voice in those words, they would hear nothing. If they could not see the gleam of a wonderful secret shining through these parables surely their hearts were hardened.

They did not hear: they could not see. Only those who had come out with him from the mountain returned with him to it. When they asked him to explain the story of the Sower, he said bitterly:

'To you the mystery of the Kingdom of God is given. But to those others it is all in parables, that

Seeing they may see and yet not perceive,
And hearing they may hear, and not understand,
Lest they should turn and be forgiven.'

They had but to come and learn; they had but to respond to the voice of truth and follow. But they would not.

Yet even with those who had followed he was disappointed. To them had been given the secret of the Kingdom, yet they could not receive it.

'You do not understand this parable?' he said. 'Then how can you understand the parables at all?

'The Sower sows the Word. The first, those

sown on the path, where the Word is sown, are they who when they hear it, Satan straightway comes and takes the Word sown in them. So also those sown on the stony ground are those who when they hear the Word straightway receive it joyfully, but they have no root in themselves – children of the moment – then tribulation or persecution comes because of the Word and they are straightway offended. Others are those sown among thistles. These hear the Word, but the cares of the world and the deceit of riches and all the desires for other things enter and choke the Word, and it bears no fruit. And those who are sown on the good soil are they that hear the Word and truly receive it, and bring forth fruit, thirty, sixty, a hundredfold.'

He had known all these kinds of men, too well. Now in the mountain only the good soil was before him. But was it really good? Could good soil really need such careful tending? 'Of her own self the earth bears fruit.' Was the word so difficult? Were the parables so hard?

'Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or under a bed? Is it not to be put on a lamp-stand?

'Nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor is anything mysterious except to be made plain.'

The parables were to make the secret clear, not to hide it. Why should he speak riddles? It was their understandings, not his words which were dark. He spoke sternly:

'Take care what you understand. With the

measure with which you measure it shall be measured to you again, and more added. For to him that hath it shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.'

Grim sentences they sound, and of supreme importance for Jesus' meaning. They show that 'with the measure with which you measure' has in its origin nothing to do with conduct, but only with understanding. The saying is so profound that it has meanings on many levels; but its highest meaning is here. If a man has a spark of understanding, it shall be made a flame: if the spark be lacking he is condemned to darkness for ever.

But *what* was to be understood? *What* was the secret? The secret of the Kingdom is the mysterious and unutterable change that works itself within the darkness of the soul of the man who can receive the Word of the Kingdom.

The secret is the rebirth of the individual man. Suddenly the spark of the Word drops into the tinder of his being; it leaps to a flame, and from the incandescence steps forth a new man – a son of God. As leaven in dough the potency of the word speeds through him, changing his substance; and the joy of receiving the word, the wonder of the first glimpse of the Kingdom, is beyond all telling.

'The Kingdom of God,' Jesus said, 'is like a treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid, and in his joy he goes away and sells his all and buys that field.'

'Again it is like a merchant whose heart was set on lovely pearls. He found one single precious pearl, and went away and sold his all and bought it.'

Such was the wonder of the wonderful news: such was the secret, which none but Jesus had found, of the Kingdom of God.

It is in very truth a mystery – impossible to understand, simple to know. Of this mystery it is in the nature of things as true to-day as it was when Jesus spoke to his disciples in the mountain. 'To him that hath, it shall be given.' Only the reborn man, or the man in whom rebirth has begun, can comprehend Jesus' teaching of the mystery of the Kingdom of God. But this much may be said:

In the mind and the speech of Jesus the Kingdom of God and the Word of the Kingdom of God were indistinguishable. The Kingdom of God was the family of the reborn sons of God; for a man to be reborn into the knowledge that he was the son of God was to be assured of membership of the Kingdom when it came. The beginning of this rebirth was to recognize the Word of the Kingdom when it was spoken and to receive it as a seed into the dark earth of the soul. If that were done, a swift and total change would come.

Therefore the Kingdom of God was at one and the same time both within men and without them; both now and not yet. There was to be the great change of the world in time; and the change in the souls of men. To assert one of these and exclude

the other is to misapprehend the essence of Jesus' message concerning the Kingdom. The great rebirth of the Universe could come only through the rebirth of the individual man. But this was not a slow and secular, but a swift and sudden process. Men had only to hear the Word; it was such that, if they heard it, it would change them by its own potency.

But what if his disciples did not understand the secret? How could they teach it then?

It was not wholly impossible. They could let their light so shine before men that they would see their good works. There were for Jesus two ways in which men might change and be reborn: in the language of later years, the way of faith and the way of works. The true way for Jesus was the way of faith, by which a man was first reborn into the knowledge that he was the son of God, and then spontaneously did the acts of a son of God. But the true way was hard; nor was the other easy: but it was easier than that. Men must do the acts of a son of God; they must obey the will of God as Jesus declared it to them. Then if they loyally did the acts, a rebirth would begin.

For the acts were so extreme that for a man to perform them was completely to annihilate his personality. The old man died; it was inevitable that a new man should come to birth. Thus a man might deliberately lose his life to save it. Yet that he should do this faith also was necessary. He must believe

that the acts commanded him were indeed the acts of a son of God, in order that he might find himself the power to do them. But this faith was different from the faith of a son of God. Not faith in God, but faith in man was necessary. It was enough to believe in Jesus as a reborn man.

Jesus' teaching on the mountain was therefore a twofold teaching of rebirth – the rebirth that came from the direct operation of the Word, when through the illimitable depths of a hard saying was seen for a moment the nature of the Kingdom of God, and the vision of the eternal truth set in motion a change in man's being; and the rebirth which would emerge out of a willing annihilation of the personality by doing acts which were extreme and impossible.

These acts which Jesus enjoined upon his disciples were the acts which were natural to Jesus, since his own rebirth. They were the acts of a man who had come to know himself the son of God.

14

THE SENDING OF THE TWELVE

On the evening of a day when Jesus was speaking his parables from the boat to the people, there was an alarm: his men rowed him hurriedly away. 'They took him in the boat,' says Mark, 'as he was' – without food or rest – 'and other boats were with them.'

He had been speaking his parables, calling to them that understood to follow him, all through the afternoon. He was weary with the effort of pouring his soul out in appeal to eyes that did not see and ears that could not hear; he was utterly weary. He fell instantly asleep in the stern.

As they rowed across to the country of the mountain, there came a sudden violent storm; but he slept on. His men grew terrified and roughly waked him.

'Master!' they cried. 'Don't you care whether we all are drowned?'

'Why are you such cowards?' he said. 'How can it be you have no faith?'

He had no need to tell the waves to be silent. He had faith and was unafraid; he knew that it was not God's will that he should die before his destiny was accomplished. And when his men looked upon his perfect serenity, the fear began to leave their hearts. The storm became less terrible, and they rowed on into calm.

Such, or like this, was the 'miracle'; and it was a miracle, the only sort of miracle that has meaning for grown men – the miracle whereby a hero creates heroes. At the breath of the pure spirit the embers of men's souls become a flame.

The glimpse of Jesus asleep in the stern of Simon's boat cannot be forgotten. When we think of his weariness and the cause of his weariness – the putting forth, in vain, of all his secret soul and strength to declare the mystery of the Kingdom and so summon forth the secret soul and strength of other men – of the rough awakening, of the instant fears of those who were most his own, of his own instant knowledge how far they were from understanding his words or him, we see, as in a sudden gleam of light, the incredible *effort* of his life, after the first brief happiness of his gospel, not merely to follow his own destiny, but incessantly to hold together his company of babes and sucklings. The vision of Jesus asleep in the stern of Simon's boat is a vision of an unspeakably lonely man.

They came to land in the late evening. As Jesus went up out of the boat towards the mountain he was met by a raving and violent lunatic, who had been cast out of men's society to fend for himself in an abandoned burial ground, where he shrieked night and day. All attempts to secure him had failed; he broke the chains and rubbed the fetters through: now he lived like a wild beast, roaming over the mountains and among the tombs, where was his lair.

This fearsome creature ran at Jesus in the twilight as he was going up from the shore to the mountain. Jesus, confident in his power over the demented soul, commanded the Spirit of Evil to leave him. The lunatic cowered at his feet. What words he actually cried with his great voice to Jesus we cannot tell, for Mark in his story has largely copied them from the words of the demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum: then it is probable they were really spoken, but afterwards Mark used the phrase 'What have I to do with you, you Son of God?' as a formula. It was not even intended to represent actual speech, but to mark the peculiar and reciprocal understanding which existed between Jesus and the deranged. The Gerasene lunatic 'recognized' him, and responded to the spiritual power which he possessed. But Mark gives more than the formula. The lunatic's cry, 'Do not torture me,' as he cowered at Jesus' feet, sounds actual, and assuredly his reply to Jesus' question, 'What is your name?' was not invented.

'My name is Legion, for we are many.'

But then darkness descends, which does not lift until we, like his countrymen, see the lunatic clothed and in his right mind. And then many days had evidently passed since Jesus' first encounter with him. Perhaps the lunatic fled shrieking from the torture which he feared from Jesus, and by his mad running scared a herd of swine down a steep place into the lake. The story as it stands is a fragment

beyond all certain restoration. We may conjecture that the lunatic fled away into the darkness on that evening, and Jesus journeyed on into the mountain. Perhaps Jesus sought him out again. Certainly he was healed and sane before Jesus left the territory of Gerasa; and when Jesus next took boat for the Galilean shore, the man was waiting to beseech that he might go with him.

Of one of Jesus' attempts, while he taught his disciples and prepared his apostles in the mountain, to re-enter Galilee, Mark gives a particular account.

He had been rowed to the Galilean shore, and crowds had begun to gather about him. Crowds hungry for healing meant danger to him. It was danger to venture away from the shore. But a man came to him with an appeal he could not resist. A president of the local synagogue named Jairus implored him to visit his little daughter who was dying. Would Jesus not go and lay his hands upon her, and she would live?

Jairus had caught sight afar of Jesus on the shore, and rushed down to entreat him. He was loath to go. But the appeal for a child overcame him. Taking Simon and James and John he followed Jairus, amid a jostling and eager crowd.

Suddenly through the press, Jesus was conscious of a touch from behind: no casual jostle, but a touch with purpose, a living touch. He stopped dead and turned about in the crowd.

'Who touched my clothes?' he said.

His three friends remonstrated: it was absurd.

'You see the crowd pressing upon you. How can you ask, Who touched you?'

Jesus paid no heed to them, but looked intently into the crowd. Someone had *touched* him.

In fear and trembling a poor woman came forward. She flung herself at his feet and stammered out her story: how she had suffered twelve years from a discharge of blood, what agonies she had endured under the doctors, how she had spent her all in paying them, and was not a penny the better, but rather the worse, how she had been told about Jesus, and had said to herself, 'If I can touch only his clothes I shall be cured'; how, finally, she had followed in the crowd behind him and had gained her desire. The moment she touched him, she had felt in her body that she was well.

Jesus listened; then he said:

'My daughter, your faith has healed you. Go away and be at peace; be cured of your trouble.'

While he was speaking to her there came messengers from home to Jairus. They said to him: 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Master further?'

Jesus overheard the words, and said to Jairus:

'Do not be afraid. Only have faith!'

Then he turned back everyone from following him, save Simon, James, and John. With these he went to Jairus' house. He looked in upon the tumult, people weeping and wailing; then he entered.

'Why make this tumult?' he said. 'Why weep? The child is not dead, only asleep.' They simply laughed.

He drove them all out of the house, and taking with him the father and mother of the child and his three friends, he entered the room where she lay. Then he took hold of her hand and said:

'*Talitha koum!* Little girl, rise up!'

She rose up instantly, and walked about.

Then he told them to give her something to eat; and charged them repeatedly to let no one know what had happened.

So Mark tells the story: its substantial truth is written upon it. The child was not dead. But whether Jesus knew and asserted this, as Mark's story suggests, before he had seen her, it is impossible to say; Mark's accuracy is not the accuracy of science. If he did, then it was because he knew the nature of her illness. We do not know what Jairus told him, when he came to beseech his healing hand.

But this reflection does not imply that, if Mark's accuracy had been the accuracy of science, the healing of the little girl would be simple to us. The spiritual power of Jesus is beyond the scope of modern science, for the simple reason that the conditions can never be repeated. Never again will a man appear who will combine so absolute a belief in his own immediate relation to a personal God with so calm and steady a scrutiny of mundane realities; never again will a man believe precisely as Jesus

believed, in God and in himself. His was the faith that could remove mountains, but would not, not the faith that would remove mountains, but could not. It will not appear in the world again.

Therefore we have no right to prescribe limits to the spiritual power of Jesus save those which he himself prescribed. He would work no sign, he said. That is to say that no act of his was such as would compel belief in his divine mission from the sceptical Pharisees. That is our criterion in accepting or rejecting his miracles: it is the criterion which Jesus himself imposed. We reject 'signs,' as he rejected them. But that he had powers of healing which it might tax our modern medicine to explain we need not doubt. But in his own day those powers, and his exercise of them, seemed not superhuman. When all the world had faith in spiritual healing, spiritual healing was plentiful; where many still have faith in it, there even to-day spiritual healing is plentiful. In an age of healers, Jesus was, doubtless, a great healer. But his healings were not such as to impress the Pharisees with a sense of any divine power. Nor would Jesus himself have had it otherwise. He commanded Jairus again and again to be silent concerning what he had done to his little girl.

Then he made a hurried journey inland to his birthplace. What induced him to it we can only guess. But he deliberately took a risk. At this moment an inland journey in Galilee was full of danger: a journey to Nazareth rash in the extreme,

for he knew that even his family had declared against him. Some overpowering nostalgia seems to have taken hold of him, a longing, at whatever cost of danger, to see his home once more, and speak, if he could, to the hearts of his townsmen. It was the same longing as that which drew him, on his final journey to Jerusalem, dangerously to revisit his second home, Capernaum, which had likewise rejected him.

Luke tells that Jesus entered the synagogue of Nazareth on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. The book of Isaiah was given to him, and he unrolled it and found the words:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he hath anointed me to preach good tidings
to the poor;
He hath sent me to proclaim deliverance to captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set free the oppressed,
To proclaim the year of favour of the Lord.

He rolled up the book and gave it to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him. 'To-day,' he said, 'this scripture that you hear is fulfilled.' And he expounded the wonderful news. But his hearers would none of it. 'Is not this the carpenter?' they said. 'The son of Mary and the brother of James and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here among us?' And some-

one must have spoken the familiar word, 'He is mad.' For Jesus turned on them and said:

'Will you say to me: Doctor, cure yourself? Or, do here what we have heard you did in Capernaum? I tell you: A prophet is not without honour except in his own country, and among his own kindred, and in his own home. Truly I tell you: There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was closed for three years and six months and a great famine was upon all the land, but to none of them was Elijah sent, but only to a widow woman of Zarephath in Sidon. And there were many lepers in Israel in the days of the prophet Elisha: yet none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.'

It was not merely of his rejection by Nazareth that Jesus spoke, but of his rejection by Galilee. The hostility of the people of Nazareth was the more violent – Luke says that they tried to kill him – but it was typical of the hostility of the whole people of Galilee. The difference was that in Nazareth no single person was found to have faith in him, so that he could do no work of healing there, and he himself, for whom rejection was no new thing, was astonished at their unbelief.

His journey to Nazareth had failed utterly. There was no place for him any more in Galilee. He returned to the mountain to set himself once more to the task of preparing his apostles: they must be able not only to proclaim the imminent coming of the

Kingdom, but to show the nature of the change that must come to pass in them that should be received into it.

Perhaps to this moment, immediately before the sending out of the apostles, belong the opening words of the Sermon on the Mount, obviously spoken in private to his disciples, at a moment when persecution was likely to be their lot:

'Blessed are the poor, for the Kingdom of God is theirs:

'Blessed are those that sorrow, for they shall be comforted:

'Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth:

'Blessed are the hungry, for they shall be filled:

'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy:

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God:

'Blessed are those who bring peace, for they shall be called God's sons:

'Blessed are those who are driven out, for the Kingdom of God is theirs:

'Blessed are you when they revile you and drive you out and say all evil against you, falsely, because of me. Rejoice, rejoice exceedingly, knowing your reward is great with God. For so they drove out the prophets which were before you.

'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt shall

become tasteless, with what can it be made salt again? It is good for nothing but to be thrown away and trodden underfoot.

'You are the light of the world! A city on a mountain cannot be hidden.

'Let your light so shine out before men's eyes that they may see the good you do and give the glory to your Father!'

'A city on a mountain cannot be hidden.' Was not the city on the mountain the company of his followers grouped about him on the mountain-side, who were to bear the message and the mystery of the Kingdom?

Then he sent them forth. He gave them, says Mark, authority over unclean spirits: they were not only his disciples, but his delegates. 'He bade them take nothing for the road except only a staff, no bread, no wallet, no pence in their purses; but to go shod with sandals, and not to put on two coats.' In that fresh and naïve catalogue one seems to hear the very voice of Peter remembering the past.

There is an almost hopeless confusion concerning the actual words spoken by Jesus to the Twelve at their sending forth. The brief charge given by Mark is expanded by Matthew to a lengthy one, of which a considerable part evidently belongs to a quite other occasion, and was perhaps never spoken by Jesus at all. On the other hand, some portions of the charge recorded by Matthew seem to be dis-

tinctly primitive. According to Mark, Jesus said:

'Wherever you enter into a house remain there until you leave that place: and whatever place will not receive you, nor its people hear you, go out from thence and shake off the dust from beneath your feet as a witness against them.'

'And they went forth,' says Mark, 'and proclaimed that men should change their hearts, and cast out many dæmons, and anointed with oil many that were infirm and cured them.'

Obviously, the message which the Twelve were to proclaim was the same that Jesus himself had proclaimed when he came up out of the desert to Galilee: 'The time is fulfilled: the Kingdom of God is at hand. Turn and be changed and believe in the good news.'

In the charge as given by Matthew, there is a greater urgency, and a more palpable sense of danger. The Twelve were not to go aside to the Pagans, nor enter into a city of the Samaritans. They were sent forth as sheep among wolves, they must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

'The disciple is not above his Master, nor the slave above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple to become as his Master, and the slave as his Lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call his servants?

'Be not afraid of them. What I tell you in the dark, that speak in the light. What is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the housetops. And be

not afraid of them that kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? Yet one of them does not fall to the ground without your Father. But with you, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Be not afraid then. You are far more worth than sparrows.

'He that receives you, receives me, and he that receives me, receives him that sent me. He that receives a prophet, because he is a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward, and he that receives a just man, because he is a just man, shall receive a just man's reward. And whoever shall give one of you a drink of cold water, because he is a disciple, I say to you he shall not lose his reward.'

So the Twelve went forth: and Jesus remained behind in the mountain.

We may, we must believe that they had come nearer to the mystery of the Kingdom by being with him, than by hearing his words: for the mystery of the Kingdom was to elude them to the last. On the very brink of his death they would be asking who was to be greatest in it.

Yet they had their excuse. Jesus himself surely believed that the Kingdom of God was at hand; he expected the coming of a Messiah in the likeness of a Son of Man foretold by Daniel. His own work had been to make straight the way to this great consummation. He himself was but the first reborn son of God, whose mission it was to proclaim that the new world was upon them, and that they could enter it

only through that rebirth which was its mystery.

Jesus knew what the Kingdom was to be; but in his own eyes he was but the forerunner still. The ineffable Messiah, the Son of Man, would appear; the world in time would be no more: and the reborn sons of God would be gathered together. He was not that Messiah, he could not be; he was waiting for him. He had been stopped by the Pharisees and the Herodians from carrying on the mighty work of preparation, showing men how they could become the sons of God.

He had gone apart and hidden in the mountain. He had prepared his messengers to take his place. He had sent forth the Twelve – one for each of the tribes of Israel. Now, with the remainder of his closer followers, he remained on the mountain and taught them and waited, for something to happen that did not happen – the coming of the Son of Man.

What, while he waited, was Jesus to himself? A son of God, the first-born son of God. That was certain; that he knew. A prophet: that was certain; that he knew. Was he perchance Elijah, that was for to come, and to restore all things, before the coming of the Son of Man? The Son of Man himself he surely was not. He had not yet even dreamed it, and if he had, the dream would have faded instantly at the thought that he, the carpenter of Nazareth, was no son of David's line.

But the Son of Man did not come.

There came instead those disciples of John to

whom he had so gently explained why his disciples did not fast. They had taken the news of him to their imprisoned master in Machærus, and told him of Jesus' words and doings. And John had sent them back with a message.

'Are *you* He that should come, or must we wait for another?'

With that question the little seed of a great certainty was sown in Jesus' heart. Might he not, after all, be the One?

Yet how could he be the One? He was no son of David's line; his had been no triumphant epiphany; he was simply a teacher and a prophet. Nay more, he was outcast and fugitive, hiding in the mountains – 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.'

The wonderful vision of Isaiah flooded his mind. Was the Coming One to come in triumph at all?

Above all else, this stood firm and unshakable: he was God's son. He had believed, he believed it still, that he was but the first of many; that all men might be God's sons, by the same birthright as he. But it was hard for them. Something stood in the way even of his nearest disciples: they could not *believe*.

God's only son; God's lonely son. What destiny was his?

He looked up out of his silence at John's men, standing before him. He said:

'Go and tell John what you hear and see.'

What was it they saw? A company of poor and outcast followers, listening. What was it they heard? The teaching of the mystery of the Kingdom of God.

For a moment Jesus saw it with their eyes, and heard it with their ears. Then he said:

'Yes, and blessed is he that is not offended in me!'

John's disciples went away. They had heard, they had seen, the mystery. How could they, who had been taught of the Coming One of Wrath, understand it? How could their master, who had taught them, understand?

After many days, the apostles of Jesus returned to him; they were glad at heart, for they too had been able to cast out evil spirits, by calling on their Master's name.

'Master, even the evil spirits are subject to us, in your name.'

He answered:

'I saw Satan fall, like a lightning flame, from the heavens.'

The power of evil was at an end; the Prince of Evil overthrown. By the pouring out of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Evil was conquered. It was, as he had told the Pharisees, the sign that the Kingdom of God was upon them. But no sign for them that could not read it; in itself nothing.

'I have given you authority over every power of the Enemy, and nothing shall do you harm. But rejoice not in this, that evil spirits are subject to you; but rejoice that your names are written in the Kingdom.'

15

THE FEEDING OF FIVE THOUSAND

SINCE his disciples had returned from their mission many had come out into the desert place to see him. Doubtless the Twelve had told the handful in each city and village who listened to their message where they might find the Master. Mark tells us of much coming and going, and little leisure for Jesus and his men even to eat.

At last there were thousands gathered there: the five thousand of the miraculous feeding. They did not find it easy to get food in that remote place, and doubtless they were wont to scatter themselves about in the villages for miles around for food: lodging they can hardly have sought when they followed one who had no place to rest his head.

What is the historical truth that lies behind the story of the miraculous feeding it is not easy to discern. It has been suggested that it was a sacramental meal, partaken by those who would enter the Kingdom, as the earnest of the day when they would eat with the Son of Man ; and of all possibilities this appears the most likely, for it most closely corresponds with what we can gather of the historical situation at this moment.

For the thousands who were now collected in the desert place about Jesus were not as the thousands who had pressed upon him when he preached on the

Capernaum side of the Lake. Those had been a curious and motley crowd, chiefly eager for miracles; these were in some sort or other chosen men. They had listened to the disciples' preaching of the Kingdom; and they had gone out to follow a fugitive, a fugitive who would lead them into the Kingdom, it is true, but still a fugitive. Whatever these men were, and whatever they may have understood of Jesus' message, they were the elect: they believed.

But in what did they believe? In the coming of the Kingdom. But of what Kingdom? Of the timeless Kingdom or the Kingdom in time? Many earnest minds have striven to return a single and definite answer to that question. But it is not possible. We cannot say of the Messianic expectation of the pious and simple Jew of those days that it was either earthly or heavenly: it was both. As ever in the human mind the spiritual reality and the material symbol were not distinct. They expected both the end of the world and the glorious epiphany of a triumphant earthly king. There was to be a catastrophic change; if they conceived what should be after the change under material forms, who shall blame them? Did Jesus' own near disciples do otherwise? Could they do otherwise? Has ever any great body of men at any time done otherwise?

Did Jesus himself do wholly otherwise? He *knew* otherwise; and because he knew otherwise he had to declare his knowledge; and because he had to

declare his knowledge, even to himself, the material symbol played its part. For 'we live by manifestations,' and the thought of the Kingdom of God is strictly ineffable. It cannot be expressed, but only experienced and lived. Which of the highest animals before the coming of the first tiny *homo sapiens* could conceive the human consciousness that was on the brink of birth? To conceive it, he needed to have it. 'To him that hath it shall be given.' It was, and is, exactly thus with the thought of the Kingdom of God. That is nothing less than a total change in man's consciousness. 'Except ye be born again ye can in no wise enter the Kingdom of God.' After that birth man would be as different from man as man is different from the brute. But that is an inconceivable miracle? No less a miracle has happened many times in the great process of Life. And that very miracle did happen to a man. It happened to Jesus of Nazareth. That alone is why the eyes of the world, blind and seeing, have ever since been fixed upon him.

Jesus had believed that the miracle of rebirth into a new condition of consciousness which had happened to him would happen to all men: the spirit would be instantly poured out upon all flesh as he proclaimed the mystery of the Kingdom of God. Just as one man's mode of perception becomes an objective reality the moment all men share it, so the Kingdom of God – the condition of consciousness in which Jesus actually lived – would swiftly and

suddenly become a reality as the Word of the Kingdom sank into all men's hearts.

But men's hearts were hard, the soil stony. They could not receive the mystery of the Kingdom of God; they could not thus triumphantly prepare themselves for the coming of the Son of Man. If all men had received the mystery, then the coming of the Son of Man would have been an instant and joyful consummation of the inward change they had achieved. But most men had turned a deaf ear to the wonderful news and refused the mystery; to them the coming of the Son of Man would be a judgment of wrath.

Jesus had done his utmost to save them. He had taught them, he had besought them, to reach the new consciousness by themselves – to become members of the Kingdom here and now and thus be assured of their happy vindication before the dread Judge who would come to establish the Kingdom with power. Out of all Israel five thousand had hearkened unto him. These were with him now. Those who had followed him from the first, those who had obeyed the summons of the Twelve and gone out to him, were all in some degree sons of God and members of the Kingdom: if they could not receive, they had not refused the mystery. Now they were waiting for the ineffable moment of the coming of the Son of Man. At that coming the eyes of the others also would be unsealed, but only to comprehend the necessity of their own damnation.

When the five thousand were with him, they and he were waiting momently for the coming of the Kingdom. For him that meant a rebirth of the world of men; what it meant for the five thousand, who can say? Something wonderful, a change, a condition of things when every tear should be wiped from every eye: something prodigious, too, the coming of the Messiah in clouds and great glory. Did it mean that for Jesus, too? It may have done; it may be that he too expected a material symbol of the change. He was not yet become for himself Messiah-to-be, the promised one. Such terrible, wonderful knowledge is not born in a moment. It is first a spark, then a flame, then a fire of certainty. At this moment Jesus also may have been waiting for the glorious epiphany of the Messiah; but he knew, with a clear and unshakable knowledge, what was the change of which that epiphany would be the sign.

It may be that the feeding of the five thousand was a sacramental meal partaken of by those who had come out to follow Jesus into the Kingdom and wait the coming of the Messiah. As they had eaten together in this world, so they would eat together as brothers in the world to be – the brotherhood of God's sons.

16

THE DESCENT AT GENNESARET

It had been a solemn meal of farewell, like the yet more solemn meal he was to share with his dwindled followers in Jerusalem. But the glorious Epiphany of the Son of Man did not occur. The time was not yet. The five thousand disbanded. He told his disciples to row towards Bethsaida, and went up into the mountain to pray.

He was about to make another attempt to proclaim the message in Galilee, and he needed the assurance that it was his Father's will. He had sent his men to Bethsaida, the frontier town of Philip's tetrarchy, whence he could in a moment pass into Galilee by land or by water. As they were rowing in the night, against a head wind and a heavy sea, they, or one of them, had a vision of Jesus walking towards them over the water, and bidding them take heart. Which they did, and pulled on to Bethsaida.

There, it seems, he met them. He had had God's blessing on his purpose, and gone round to the meeting-place by land. He went aboard and was rowed to Gennesaret in Galilee. There we may imagine him and his men camped on the shore ready to take to their boats and row away.

The report of his reappearance, and of the crowds following him, reached the Pharisees. They had come down from Jerusalem. Whether they came

post-haste again at the news of Jesus' descent into Galilee, or whether they had remained there, after their league with the officials of Antipas had driven him into exile, as a kind of spiritual garrison to extirpate his influence and keep guard against a new invasion, there is no telling. This narrative, so far as the material details of Jesus' brief ministry are concerned, purports to be no more than a credible imaginative construction from a mass of strictly irreconcilable data. But it seems more probable that the Pharisees and Scribes from Jerusalem remained in Galilee on the alert in anticipation of some such descent as Jesus was now making.

Whether they really had the civil power of Antipas on their side is more than doubtful. Probably they could count on nothing more than the religious zeal of local officials. Away in Machærus Antipas had, at about this time, executed John the Baptist, it is true; but he had acted unwillingly, under a sort of compulsion of honour. It was, indeed, under such a compulsion that he had arrested him. For John had openly proclaimed that his marriage with Herodias, the divorced wife of his stepbrother Philip, was incestuous. But Antipas was afraid of the prophet, and was half-inclined, for all his Greek culture, to believe in his terrible menace of the Wrath to come. Perhaps he had the superstitious hope that by keeping John as a hostage he might shelter himself behind him from the dread blast of the great winnowing-fan. Antipas was a Hellenized Jew; his

Greek scepticism was probably only skin-deep, and so also, we imagine, was his Jewish faith. He was the cosmopolitan 'credulous Jew' of Horace's satire, who could no longer believe anything and therefore believed everything.

He became the fascinated listener of the grim prophet in his prison. What he prophesied might be true? Why not? At all events he would not take the risk of following Herodias' persistent admonition, and kill him. But at a birthday banquet to his chief officials, who were Græcized like himself, Herodias' daughter Salome so delighted him and his guests by her dancing that he promised to give her whatever she asked. She was, of course, incredulous. But he confirmed his promise with a solemn oath: up to the half of his kingdom he would give her whatever she asked. She went out and said to her mother: 'What shall I ask for?' Her mother replied: 'The head of John the Baptist.' The girl returned and said to Antipas that she wanted him to give her the head of John the Baptist on a dish. The king was caught: before his Græcized company he must not fail his solemn oath. He sent a soldier to bring the head. The soldier brought it on a dish and gave it to the girl, who gave it to her mother.

It was natural that Herod's superstitious and uneasy mind, receiving the news of Jesus' doings in Galilee, should have immediately conceived the idea that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead. If he had been reluctant to make an end of John, he

would be doubly reluctant to attempt to make a second end of him. He would have liked to see him, no doubt to satisfy himself whether he was or was not the resurrected John. But he was not anxious to arrest him, much less to find himself in a situation where the blood of yet another prophet might be upon his head.

Herod's reluctance in the affair was all the more reason why the Pharisees should not relax their vigilance. There are indications in Luke's narrative that they were sedulous in spreading the false report that Herod had declared war on the new prophet. Mark speaks only of a league between the Pharisees and Herod's officials. It seems probable that it was their report to Herod, asking for instructions, which reached him soon after John's execution, and was the cause of his belief that Jesus was the resurrected John. They would have been told to go carefully in the matter; whatever reality there may have been in the report of concerted action against Jesus between Herod's officials and the Pharisees, the Pharisees could no longer count on the help of the Herodians. That was news which they certainly would not have published abroad. Their business was to keep Jesus and his followers in the persuasion that Herod was against him. It was not difficult. The execution of John must have led Jesus to expect the worst from Herod. How was he to know that Herod suspected him to be a reincarnation of John, or that he had been reluctant to proceed to extremities against John, and

would be infinitely more reluctant to proceed to extremities against himself?

Behind the Pharisees, for Jesus, was the incalculable authority of Herod. For him, they were in league together against him. Therefore in his descent upon Gennesaret in Galilee he remained with his disciples, encamped on the shore, within reach of the boats for instant flight. There the Pharisees from Jerusalem came out to meet him. The charge they made against him was obvious. His disciples were eating bread with unwashen hands. Naturally: they were taking a hurried meal in the enemy's country. How were they to find time or means for ceremonial washing if they had desired it? But they were long past ceremony: they followed the new law of their Master.

'Why,' said the Pharisees to Jesus, 'do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders, and eat bread with common hands?'

Jesus had neither cause nor need to spare them. Here was the enemy who had driven him from his own country and his own people, who had worked disaster to his mission.

'Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, you hypocrites! in the Book:

This people honoureth me with their lips,
But their heart is far from me.
Their worship is a mockery,
An empty tradition.

You have let go God's commandment, and taken hold of the "tradition" of men. How beautifully you make null the commandment of God that you may keep your own "tradition!" For Moses said, "Honour thy father and thy mother"; and, "Whoso curseth father or mother let him die the death." But you say: If a man shall say to his father or his mother: "Whatever you might have had from me is a gift to God," he must not do anything more for his father or mother – thus making null the word of God by your "tradition" which you have made. And many other things like this you also do.'

He turned away from the Pharisees to the common folk standing by, and said:

'Hear me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing outside a man which entering into him can make him unclean. It is the things which go out of him that make a man unclean.'

When he was alone again with his disciples they asked him what he meant by the saying. He replied:

'Are you also so without understanding? Do you not know that whatever enters a man from without cannot make him unclean, because it enters not into his heart, but into his belly, and goes out of him into the drain. But what comes forth from a man, that makes him unclean. For from within the hearts of men come forth evil speaking, harlotry, thievery, murder, adultery, covetousness, wicked-

ness, treachery, lust, the evil eye, blasphemy, pride and presumption. All these evil things come forth from within; and they make a man unclean.'

17

THE FLIGHT TO THE NORTH

SUDDENLY we hear of Jesus in the far north, in the territories of Tyre and Sidon. His descent into Galilee had failed. The Pharisees were vigilant; and for the first time in his reply to them we catch the note of angry and withering contempt for them, which was thenceforward constant in their encounters, and has branded them for ever. They had thwarted him in his divine purpose. Scarcely had he appeared in Galilee than they had come out against him. He believed they had the civil power of Herod behind them, and they encouraged the belief.

He must have fled hurriedly. From what we can gather it seems that he made his way inland through Galilee. Mark speaks of his explanation of his word about defilement as given when they returned 'to the house.' It is rash to press such a word, but it looks as though Jesus had returned secretly to Capernaum, and a sudden alarm had prevented him from regaining the boat and his hiding-place on the other side. He escaped from Galilee by land northwards, and made a long and circuitous journey, through Tyre and Sidon, then eastward, down through the cities of the Decapolis, back at last to the farther shore of the Lake and his old hiding-place, where doubtless he had given the word to his followers to await him. Even in Tyre he chose to remain concealed.

Little is known of this great flight, save its rough course, and the single incident of the casting out of the dæmon from the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman at Tyre. Matthew speaks of disciples being with Jesus; Mark of none. Mark's account, as everywhere, is the more original. Jesus was alone. The historical fact is important, yet not so precious as the indication that the story of the Syro-Phœnician woman was told to his disciples by Jesus himself on his return. For it is a strange little story.

He was lodging somewhere concealed in Tyre. No doubt he had a handful of followers there among the Jewish inhabitants. People from Tyre and Sidon had come out to hear him long ago. But the Syro-Phœnician woman was not a Jewess; she was a Syrian Greek. She heard about him, however, and came to ask him to cure her daughter of her dæmon.

He said to her:

'Let the children first eat their fill. It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.'

She answered:

'Yes, Master. But the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.'

'For that reply,' said Jesus, 'go your way: the dæmon has left your daughter.'

She went home and found the child flung down upon the bed and the dæmon gone from her.

What kind of malady the dæmon personified, there is no telling. Nor is there any profit in inquiries for which there are no data; but it is easy, nay natural, to believe that such a man as Jesus had powers of spiritual healing, which were indeed spiritual, due to his conviction of the presence and power of God within him. And these powers, we conceive, it would tax modern medical science either to deny or to explain.

That is not greatly important: what is important is that Jesus must have told this story of himself. It was, he said, the woman's reply that had wrung the cure from him. What was in the reply? Two things: pathos, and a quick wit, inseparably combined. Not to her wit alone, not to her pathetic humility, had he responded: but to both in one. Because of her wit, her humility is not merely humble; because of her humility her wit is not merely witty. It is the jest that a nature in deadly earnest could not suppress; the speech of one who knew by instinct that she had a complete human being before her, to whom to appeal – a prophet, a great prophet, the greatest of all prophets – therefore a prophet with a sense of humour.

The phrase, 'a sense of humour,' sounds crude and clumsy when spoken of Jesus. A sense of humour belongs to the old Adam, at his best: and Jesus was a new man. His qualities were all new: his quickness of apprehension, his profound simplicity of speech, his astonishing power of revealing an abysm

of meaning through a transparent phrase – these appear before us in a combination so harmonious that we take them, as it were, for granted. They seem natural; and they are natural. Nothing is so new as a new naturalness, nothing so difficult to apprehend. A new simplicity is the most baffling of all human achievements and the most perdurable.

To those to whom Jesus is God, it must inevitably be almost blasphemous to emphasize so signal a trait in Jesus as his humour. Yet to those for whom Jesus is wholly man, and the more divine for that, this humour of his is infinitely precious. The man of sorrows is the man who called Peter 'the Rock,' and James and John 'the sons of Thunder'; he was, before all else, like Shakespeare, a smiling man. To him his chief followers were ever so little absurd: absurdly lovable. Those two sons of Zebedee whom we see, in Luke, clamorous to call down fire upon a village that would not receive them; obstreperous to demand for themselves to sit one on his right hand and one on his left in the Kingdom – what more perfect name for such spiritual children than 'Sons of Thunder'? Jesus' smile of humour was one with his love and his forgiveness: it was one more acknowledgment of the divine particularity of the universe.

He did not, we imagine, meet with much humour in others in his earthly course. Humour has never been a Jewish virtue. The religion of the Pharisee, great as it was and is, could never have had birth in a nation with a sense of humour: it would have been

killed by ridicule among a people which shared Jesus' vision of the Pharisees as men straining out gnats and swallowing camels. That single phrase would have scotched Pharisaism in a laughter-loving people; and justly, for the humour is divine. It is God's protest against those who would contort man from his authentic fashioning in God's image. The true Shekinah is man, said Chrysostom. When universal laughter is the portion of those who would distort and defile it, the Kingdom of God will not be far from earth.

Not much humour therefore in his own folk was it Jesus' lot to find: he found it in a Syro-Phœnician woman of Tyre. He was solitary and a fugitive, making a long and weary journey. On his return he told nothing of his woes that his disciples could remember – only the story of the little dogs and the crumbs. 'For that reply go your way: the dæmon has left your daughter.'

From Tyre he went to Sidon, and thence by a circuitous route, keeping remote from Galilee, to his old mountain retreat in the Decapolis. There he met his disciples again; and it may be to the vividness of their recollection of the meeting that we owe a curiously circumstantial account of his healing a deaf-mute. Jesus took him apart privately and placed his fingers in the deaf-mute's ears; then he spat and touched his tongue with the spittle; then, looking up into heaven, he groaned and said to the man, '*Ephphatha!* – Open!' And immediately the

impediments of the man's ears and tongue were loosened, and he began to speak correctly. Once again Jesus charged the man to tell no one of his cure.

It is curious that this strangely realistic account of one of Jesus' healings should be followed at a little distance by another of precisely the same kind – the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida. Those two accounts are unique in the gospel narrative. One might explain their appearance[1] at this precise point in Mark's story by supposing that among those gathered to meet Jesus on his return was a man with a much more exact and material vision than was possessed by the disciple who supplied Mark with the main substance of his narrative. It is probable enough. For on Jesus' return, many were once more gathered round him; and once again, on the eve of yet another attempt to enter Galilee and carry on his work there, Jesus distributed a sacramental meal to thousands of fellow-sons of God, and members of the Kingdom. Mark gives the number as four thousand, a thousand less than the five to whom Jesus had distributed the

[1] A different explanation is accepted by many modern critics, namely that the feeding of 4,000 and the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida is a 'doublet' of the feeding of 5,000 and the healing of the deaf-mute, i.e. two different accounts of the same incidents have been mistakenly included in Mark's narrative. I do not find it completely convincing.

sacramental meal on the eve of his previous attempt to enter Galilee.

Perhaps we do wrong to press the figures; yet it is difficult not to see in them evidence of a dwindling of Jesus' following. Was the following of the Man who verily had not where to rest his head too hard for them? Was the coming of the Kingdom too long delayed?

Once more, we can but ask, what expectation had they? What expectation had Jesus? And the answer seems inevitable that they, and he, at this point of time, still waited for the coming of the Son of Man. For them this divine epiphany was one thing: for him another: he knew the change in the nature of man of which it was only the miraculous investiture, they did not. To his knowledge, ultimate, eternal, unshakable, the refusal of an expected sign was but the condition of a purer knowledge: he had misread God's purpose in time, he had unwittingly taken over into his immediate certainty fragments of an old expectation. Now the last scales of error were fallen from his eyes: he knew the unspeakable truth. But to many of his followers he was only a prophet who had prophesied in vain.

Yet of five thousand, four thousand had remained. From four thousand he took his solemn departure, before he went once more to carry the wonderful news into Galilee. His nearer disciples rowed him once more across the Lake, to some unknown place which Mark calls 'the parts of Dalmanutha,' and

Matthew Magadan or Magdala. It may be a corruption of 'the parts about Tiberias' – the great Græco-Jewish city on the Lake: Herod's capital of Galilee.

The Pharisees were still on the alert, ready to receive him. They knew what had happened on the other side. The thousand that were his, and were his no longer, had not failed to spread the news abroad. There was exultation in the voices of the Pharisees:

'Show us a sign from heaven!'

He groaned in spirit. It was the moment of extreme outward defeat. The triumphant Pharisees were before him, jeering at his impotence.

'Why does this generation ask for a sign? Verily I say to you: No sign shall be given to it!'

The truth: bitter to him to utter at this moment to his triumphant enemies, the victorious defenders of Galilee. Yet less than the truth, for the truth was yet unborn. They were to be given such a sign as the human mind had never dreamed.

'Get away from here,' said the Pharisees. 'Because Herod wants to kill you.'

It was a lie; but Jesus could not but believe it. He answered:

'Go, and say to that fox: "Behold, I cast out dæmons and do healings to-day and to-morrow, and the next day my work is done. Yet to-day and to-morrow and the next day I must journey on, for it is not permitted that a prophet should die outside Jerusalem." '

Bitterly, wearily spoken, by one weary of a

journey without rest, a labour without respite. He turned back to the boat and was rowed away.

His last attempt to enter his own country had failed, the discredited prophet was rowed hurriedly away. There had been no time for his men even to buy bread; they had but a single loaf in the boat with them. They told him so.

Bread? Bread? 'Man shall not live by bread alone.' His thoughts were otherwhere, brooding over his strange destiny.

'Bread – we have no bread!' they told him again.

'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,' he answered, 'and of Herod.'

Oh, these dark sayings! What did he mean? Was he blaming them for having no bread? They murmured apart among themselves.

'Why do you talk,' he said wearily, 'of having no bread? Do you not see, do you not understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes, do you not see; having ears, do you not hear?'

So they rowed to Bethsaida.

18

CÆSAREA PHILIPPI

BETHSAIDA was outside Herod's jurisdiction, yet on the borders of Galilee. It was the natural place for Jesus to seek when he had come out of his mountain-retreat and was driven from Galilee. He must have taught and wrought there a long while; but of his ministry in Bethsaida no record remains save the story of the healing of the blind man. Nor can we tell whether that healing was done in Bethsaida itself, or in one of the villages attached to it. Mark speaks of a village, but Bethsaida itself was more than a village.

Men brought a blind man to Jesus and besought him to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. There he spat into his eyes, and laid his hands upon them, and asked: 'Do you see anything?'

The blind man looked up and said: 'I see men, for I see things like walking trees.'

Then Jesus once more laid his hands upon the man's eyes, and the man saw through the veil, and had distinct sight of everything. Jesus sent him home, charging him not even to go into the village.

That is all we know of Jesus' actual work in Bethsaida; but there was far more than that. Bethsaida shares with Chorazin and Capernaum the ignominy of Jesus' bitter denunciation. Not less than at

Capernaum must he have worked there; and not less than by Capernaum was he rejected by it.

We may suppose that Bethsaida was the last town wherein he sought to work among men. He would have been able to work there after Galilee was closed to him; and we know that Bethsaida was the last town he visited before the great decision of Cæsarea Philippi.

Somewhere in the outskirts of Bethsaida we must imagine him, returned from his last venture into Galilee, with the remnant of his dwindled followers. And Bethsaida would have none of the discredited prophet. In Galilee, out of Galilee, he was rejected. He turned away to the north. As he went, he cried out in his bitterness:

'Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! Had the works done in you been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes, long ago. And thou, Capernaum! *Exalted to Heaven? No, you will be brought down to Hell.* For if the works done in you had been done in Sodom, Sodom would have lasted to this day. I tell you, it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.'

It was the moment of his extreme defeat, as he led the way northward from Bethsaida. What was he now? What did his men believe he was? He turned to them.

'Who do men say that I am?'

They answered:

'John the Baptist; others say Elijah; others, one of the prophets.'

He asked:

'But you – who do you say that I am?'

Simon answered:

'You are the Messiah.'

Jesus said:

'You are blessed among men, Simon son of John, for it was not flesh and blood, but my Father in heaven who revealed this to you.'

And he charged them that they should speak of it to no man.

Jesus was at the nadir of his earthly career. He had been finally cast forth from his own country of Galilee. He was to revisit it but once more, in disguise and concealed. Whatever dreams he may have had of leading his countrymen into the Kingdom were shattered. He had learned that they would follow only a leader who had a sign: and he could not, and would not, give them one.

He was a prophet, nearing his downfall. There were those who called him John the Baptist: and what forbade that the Baptist should be once more beheaded? There were others who called him, as they had called John the Baptist before him, Elijah: and what forbade that the third Elijah should go the way of the second? And to those to whom he was simply some prophet or other – well, there had been many prophets in the history of

Israel, and most of them had come to a bad end. Jesus was well on the way to his.

So to the outward eye. But what was Jesus to his own inward eye? Above all things else, the son of God, who had sought in vain for earthly brothers. By bitter experience he had proved himself God's only son. He had his choice: either to deny the knowledge that he knew, of his absolute communion with a loving Father, or bear his strange destiny to the end.

Of his communion with God he could not doubt. But other men had communed with God. None knew so well as he the authentic voice of God as it came from the lips of the prophets of old. But his communion was different, strangely different: he had known God, not as a servant knows a master, but as a long-lost son his hidden Father. Jesus was such a man that he could have known God in no other way. Had God been less than he found him, he would have refused him. For him God had to be one in whom all his love could find satisfaction and rest. To him no other God was possible; and to all other men such a God was impossible.

So he had become, inevitably, God's only son. The more utterly his message was rejected, the more certainly men refused the birthright that he offered them, to be and to act as God's sons, the more strange and mysterious and wonderful became his own destiny.

God's only son. Perhaps the splendour of that

loneliness is unthinkable. Yet somehow we must imagine it, even though it be, as it can be, only for a single moment. We must know that it was not some mysterious and unimaginable delusion. He had become what he had become by an inexorable necessity. Once grant the fact of this man's communion with God as he came up from John's baptism – and who, that has eyes to see, can deny it? – then he was inevitably bound to become verily and indeed the only son of God.

God's first-born son, who had found no brother. For such a man what place was there in the world of men? What was *his* destiny? One position and one alone was marked for him in the Jewish expectation, which he in his own fashion shared. He must be the Messiah, the anointed one, the appointed Judge, the Son of Man. Yet even that he could not be now, in this world, on the road between Bethsaida and Cæsarea. A human Messiah – that was unthinkable. Some mighty change must intervene. The Son of God must put off his garment of flesh and blood that he might become the Son of Man. The burden of a mighty and intolerable destiny lay upon him.

And as he wrestled with it on the road, he put to Simon the great question: 'Who am I?'

For an instant Simon thought the unthinkable thought. It was compelled from him by the spirit of the man before him. Truly it was not flesh and blood that revealed it on that day to Simon, the

son of John, as he followed his defeated Master on the road, and Jesus suddenly turned back to him. For that answer Simon is indeed blessed, through all the ages. Through those words God's lonely son, for an instant, touched a brother. Simon had revealed Jesus to himself.

From henceforward this was the secret between Jesus and his near disciples. He was the Messiah-to-be. And he began to unfold to them, quite openly, the secret of his destiny as Messiah. He would suffer many things; he would be killed; but he would rise again, and come in his new glory as the true Messiah, bringing with him the end of the world and the opening of the Kingdom of God.

Substantially, I am convinced, the story of Jesus' telling the disciples of his rising again is true. I do not believe that he said he would rise again *in three days*. For the simple reason that there is nothing in the primitive Gospel narrative to show that after the Crucifixion the disciples had the faintest expectation of his being raised from the dead after three days. The disciples are represented as completely surprised by the resurrection. If Jesus had openly declared to them that he would rise again from the dead in three days, such an attitude of surprise would have been impossible: on the contrary, their attitude must have been one of eager and impatient expectation. They would not have left it to the faithful women to visit the tomb on the third morning.

We can but conjecture what Jesus foretold to his

disciples concerning his destiny at death. But there are solid grounds for conjecture. For it is apparent from the whole tenor of the various conflicting narratives of the Passion that something which Jesus and his disciples expected to happen did not in fact happen. That is the plain and incontrovertible meaning of his despairing cry: *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani.* His God had forsaken him. When he uttered that cry, Jesus was yet alive, though on the point of death. Therefore that which was to happen to him, and had not happened to him, was to have happened before the supreme point of physical death. It did not happen: Jesus died with a loud cry, and the last flame of hope of his disciples sank into ashes.

I do not pretend to know, or to be able to imagine, precisely what was this happening in which Jesus trusted. But we may assume that it was of this that Jesus spoke in his reply to the high-priest's question: 'Are you the Christ?' Then he said:

'I am: and you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.'

He was to have experienced a miraculous change before death: to have put off his earthly garment, and become the supernatural Messiah of Jewish expectation. I firmly believe that this reply to the chief-priest, which has been repeatedly impugned by modern criticism, is authentic. That was Jesus' expectation.

For these sufficient reasons, as they seem, I regard the story of his having foretold to his disciples his death and resurrection in three days, as a pious invention after the fact. He may have told them that he was to die and that he was to rise from the dead; but his death was not to be actual death. He was indeed to suffer to the extremity, but then he would be changed.

But this conception which had come to birth in Jesus' soul, of a suffering Messiah, was utterly strange to his disciples. Simon had recognized him as the Messiah, indeed – but a suffering Messiah, that was impossible. It was, for the mind of his disciples, an unthinkable thought. It is so familiar to men like ourselves, heirs of two thousand years of Christian thought and feeling, that it is hard for us to realize how utterly inconceivable it was to the fishermen of Galilee. Simon had been lifted up in a moment of inspiration when he proclaimed Jesus the Messiah. To reconcile his vision with the reality was beyond his power. Jesus had spoken his mysterious words concerning his coming suffering, and was walking ahead alone. The disciples pondered the mystery: it was too hard for them. Then Simon hurried to overtake him, and speaking to Jesus from behind, began to rebuke him for his words.

Jesus turned round upon him, and looked upon the disciples gathered behind their spokesman. He said to Simon:

'Follow behind me, Satan; you think like a man, not like God.'

Then he called the outer disciples that followed behind the Twelve up to him, and said to them all:

'If any man will follow behind me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever will save his life, will lose it. And whoever will lose his life for my sake will save it. For what shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? For with what payment can a man buy back his soul?

'For whoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

His outer followers did not understand that the Son of Man was Jesus himself. Only the Twelve knew that, for he had charged them to tell no man. To those outside the Twelve such speech referred to the coming of One of whom Jesus was but the forerunner. To the Twelve it had a stranger and more poignant meaning.

Finally Jesus said:

'Verily, I tell you that there are some of those standing here who shall not taste of death until they see the Kingdom of God come with power.'

That was surely no promise of longevity to chosen disciples. It bears its plain meaning, as a vivid and forcible declaration of Jesus' own belief: that the Kingdom of God would come soon. It would come

soon after Jesus had made the sacrifice of himself, and was changed from the earthly prophet into the heavenly Messiah.

Nor, for my own part, do I doubt the authenticity of Jesus' words: 'Let him take up his cross!' The critical objection that Jesus could not have known that the manner of his death would be crucifixion, leaves me unmoved. I think he knew well that he was to suffer the death of a thief and a robber; and I have no doubt that he foresaw the manner of his agony.

It would not be profitable to inquire how the conception of a suffering Messiah, which was to remain unintelligible to his disciples, came to be born in Jesus' secret soul. It is possible, perhaps even certain, that the wonderful picture of Israel as the suffering servant in 53rd Isaiah, which was surely so familiar to him that it was almost part of himself, helped to bring to pass the 'transvaluation of all values' implied in the thought of a suffering Messiah. Nor would it in the least affect the potency of the second Isaiah's sublime imagination that he described Israel and not the Messiah. It is the order and quality of the imagination alone that would matter to such a one as Jesus. He was not, as the higher critics so often assume, a higher critic. He was the supreme man – poet, prophet, hero: indeed, I know not what predicate of supreme humanity could be denied him. Into the mind of such a man a scruple so earth-bound and barren as the question, Does this

speak of Israel or the Messiah? could not have entered. Was he himself not a prophet, and more than a prophet? Did *he* not know that the meaning of a prophet's words was not in the letter, but in the knowledge of God that shone through them. Would he have read the 53rd Isaiah as a Herr Professor of Weissnichtwo reads it? It would have meant to him: victory out of utter defeat as the inmost secret of God's plan. If even our dull minds respond to that amazing vision of Isaiah and recognize its inspiration, what would it have been to one whose ears were attuned as no man's have ever been to hear the secret voice of God?

But for this very reason we need not to assume any influence of Isaiah working in Jesus' soul. A greater than Isaiah was there. He needed not even the sublimest voice of all the sublime voices of Israel's prophets to tell him of God's strange and wonderful purpose, now. Perhaps far away, in that infinitely distant past when he was a little boy in Nazareth, and had a home and a mother and brothers and sisters, and called to other little boys in the dark across the market-place, Isaiah's vision of the man of sorrows may have helped to tune his hearing to God's most secret sighing; perhaps, had Isaiah not known and spoken, Jesus' own knowledge and speech might have been other than they were. But that was far away: what Isaiah had to give him had been given long ago – in another life. Now he needed not such a voice, nor even its comfort. He had but

to follow his own inevitable destiny to know that the conception of the suffering Messiah was true. He was to be the Messiah and he suffered; he was to suffer yet more.

God's only son was alone with his strange and wonderful destiny – to suffer and to die and to rise again. He must go to Jerusalem, to the city of God, to the fortress of the old covenant, and proclaim his message there. That he would die proclaiming it, there was no doubt: the Pharisees who had driven him into exile from his own dear land of Galilee, where their power was small, would exact the uttermost from him in the Holy City, where their power was great. Into the living centre of the old religion of Israel he must go and there proclaim the new knowledge of God. The decision was inevitable: where could the son of God die but on God's altar?

He was alone. From this hour all the disciples forsook him and fled. Though their bodies followed him yet for a little while, their spirits could not. From now onward they saw his face from afar, as in a dream, as though it were an angel's. It was a man's.

He was alone: save for his Father. He went up into a high mountain to seek him. With him he took Simon and James and John. They waited apart, and watched him as he prayed. He prayed vehemently and long, till at length evening came on and they were oppressed with sleep. Suddenly they woke, and it seemed to them that his face was changed,

and his garments white beyond any human bleaching. They heard him speaking to someone near him concerning the grievous journey to Jerusalem that he must accomplish; and it seemed to them that there were two majestic figures of men in the half-light at his side, one of whom they took for Moses, and the other for Elijah.

They were beside themselves with fear; and Simon, in trembling, not knowing what to say, called out idle words:

'Master, it is good for us that we are here. Let us make three huts, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'

Even as they spoke there was total darkness, and out of the darkness they seemed to hear the very voice of God saying, 'This is my beloved Son: hearken to him!' and at the sound of the voice they fell on their faces for fear.

But Jesus came forward. He touched them where they lay and said: 'Do not be afraid.' And they looked up and about them, and there was no one, save Jesus, all alone.

The three disciples kept secret the story of their vision until after Jesus was crucified and they had become persuaded that he had risen bodily from the grave. Indeed, it was only then that they veritably saw the vision. They remembered that from the moment they went up with Jesus into the mountain he was changed: he was the same Jesus whom they had followed, yet he was another Jesus, whom

they followed in fear. Truly, on that day, when he communed with his Father on the mountain-top concerning his journey to Jerusalem, he was transfigured. Then he knew that he was indeed the solitary son of God, and was given strength to bear his destiny as the son of Man.

Yet, though we may well believe that the face of Jesus was changed as he communed with God and passed into the final knowledge of his mission and his destiny, and the three disciples long afterwards remembered the change in his face, and the voice in the darkness, and their own fears, there was no miraculous happening of a kind to bring them certitude. Had they indeed seen what afterwards they imagined they had seen, they would have felt no doubts as they came down the mountain-side with their Master. If it had been so proved to them that Jesus was the Messiah as they afterwards recounted, they would not have been wondering *how* he could be the Messiah as they descended.

They asked him: 'Why do the Scribes say that Elijah must come first?'

He answered: 'Elijah does indeed come first to restore everything. And he has come already, but they would not recognize him. They worked their will upon him, as it is written. And what is written of the Son of Man himself? That he must suffer many things and be utterly rejected.'

If Jesus spoke these last words, which we may not doubt, he had made the vision of Israel in the 53rd

Isaiah into a prophecy concerning the Messiah. That it was not, in the strict sense of scholarship and history. Yet it was, from the moment that Jesus made it so; just as John the Baptist was not Elijah, nor had he restored everything. Jesus made him Elijah.

And it was at this moment that he spoke his words concerning John the Baptist:

'What went ye out into the desert to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

'But what went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Those who wear silk are in king's palaces.

'But what went ye out to see? A prophet? Yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it was written:

'Behold I send my messenger before thy face
Who shall prepare the way before thee.

'Verily I say to you: Among men born of women there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist. But the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of God suffers violence, and men of violence seize it to themselves. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied up to John. And if you can receive it, this is Elijah that was to come.

'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.'

In those strange dark words the new secret was spoken. Elijah the forerunner had indeed come, and

he who was to come after him, was there. And Elijah belonged to the old dispensation: he belonged with the Law and the Prophets, and the last word of the last prophet had foretold his coming. But after him had come something unknown, unexpected and unforetold – the Kingdom of God's love. The least of its members was greater than John, for the least of its members belonged to the new creation : he had been reborn.

And this Kingdom had been plucked by violent hands from heaven: first by the strong, masterful hands of the true Prometheus, who had torn through the Law and the Prophets to find God face to face. He had brought God down from heaven to earth. And then it was plucked from heaven no less by those who listened to his words, and into whom the message of the Kingdom fell as a seed: men who, like their leader, changed themselves and made the Kingdom real.

The teacher of this new violence was the promised one. It was all utterly different from what men had imagined. John the Baptist was Elijah. He had restored nothing; and he had been beheaded. Only he that had ears to hear could understand the mystery. A yet greater mystery of the same kind was the destiny of the Son of Man.

Jesus said:

'To what shall I liken this generation?

'It is like children who sit in the market-place and call to their playmates: "We piped for you, and you

did not dance; we wailed, and you did not beat your breasts."

'For John came neither eating nor drinking and they say: "He has a devil." The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say: "Look: a glutton and a drunkard! The friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!" But Wisdom is justified by her works.'

The bitterness of his rejection pressed hard upon him at this crucial moment. Rejection had indeed made him the only son of God, and Messiah-to-be: but the new consciousness of his destiny made rejection harder to bear. It was no longer a prophet whom his countrymen had rejected.

But the bitterness of Jesus passed. Not the bitterness, but the wonder of his destiny filled him, when he cried:

'I praise thee, Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and hast revealed them unto babes. Yea, Father, for so it seemed good to thee.

'All knowledge has been given to me by the Father, and no one knows the Son save the Father, nor does any know the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.'

From the proud pinnacle of this exultant knowledge he spoke the imperishable words:

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am gentle and lowly in

heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'

Exultation, bitterness, exultation, tenderness – such were the moods of Jesus at the great turning-point of his destiny. Verily he had gone up into a high mountain and had been transfigured. When he went up, he had believed that he was Messiah-to-be; when he descended he was certain of it. A high imperious certainty speaks in all his words. Like a King indeed, who has God's will for his own, he remoulds the past and he creates the future. John is Elijah, and he the Messiah-to-be. And was it not written that the Son of Man should suffer many things? It was not written: Jesus made it to be written. Isaiah's picture of the suffering servant would, for ever after, become a prophecy of Jesus the Messiah. As the omnipotent Judge he was to be, he pronounced sentence upon the cities that had refused him. As the only Son, he praised his Father that his message had been refused. Yet at the last – always the same last with this man – the impulse of his love conquers all. The King of men becomes simply their longing and loving brother.

Everything was changed in him when he came down from the mountain; but this will never change. This more than all things else had made him what he was; and this had changed the joyful preacher of glad news, the teacher of wonderful wisdom, into the stern and sorrowful man of destiny. Even his

face was changed. The few glimpses we catch of it henceforward are of the face of a transfigured man.

He was the Messiah, going the appointed way of suffering and rejection. He would not, he could not proclaim himself. He was already a defeated prophet; it was out of his defeat that he had wrung his certainty. But his certainty was for himself alone. To proclaim himself Messiah was to proclaim himself a suffering and rejected Messiah: which to the Jew then and for ever was madness. What was a stumbling-block to those who loved him would be a blasphemy to those who hated him. It was a secret between him and his disciples.

Jesus and his three disciples descended from the mountain in the morning. As they came to the rest of the disciples they found them surrounded by a crowd, and Scribes disputing with them. When the crowd saw Jesus, they were astounded and ran to greet him.

Jesus asked his disciples: 'What are you disputing with them?'

A man from the crowd called out: 'Master, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb dæmon. And whenever it seizes him, it rends him, and he foams and grinds his teeth: he is wasting away. So I asked your disciples to cast it out; but they could not.'

Jesus answered: 'O faithless generation! How long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me.'

So they brought the boy. And the moment he saw Jesus he was convulsed and fell on the ground and rolled about foaming.

Jesus asked the father: 'How long has he had this?'

The father answered: 'From a baby. Often it throws him into fire, and into water, to kill him. But have compassion on us and help us, if you can!'

'If *I* can?' said Jesus. 'If you believe, *you* can have anything.'

The father instantly cried: 'I believe. Help my unbelief!'

Jesus saw that a crowd was running up. Quickly he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying: 'Dumb and deaf spirit, I command you: Come out of him, and enter him no more!'

The boy shrieked and was convulsed and lay as though dead. The crowd said he was dead. But Jesus took hold of his hand and raised him up and he stood upon his feet, cured.

When they were alone together, the disciples asked him why they themselves could not cast the spirit out.

Jesus said: 'There is but one means of casting out this kind – that is prayer.'

Jesus had prayed indeed on the mountain-top. Such prayer as no other man prayed. Other men have been lifted by prayer into complete communion with God, none into loving union with

a Father. In the great prayer of the night before he had known his destiny, and his face was changed.

Veritably changed: so that the dull eyes of men could see. When the crowd looked upon him they saw another man from him who had left them: they were astounded. But it is to Luke we owe the great picture of the change in Jesus' face at this moment: the sentence stands starkly out of his soft and facile writing, like a rock in a meadow. 'He made his face rigid for the journey to Jerusalem.' The destiny of the son of God was marked upon it.

PART II

Cæsarea Philippi marks the great division in the known life of Jesus. Before that moment he had been primarily a teacher; after it, he was Messiah, or rather Messiah-to-be. And to this great change in the life of Jesus corresponds a great change in his teaching.

But the change was not abrupt. Jesus' life, from his baptism in Jordan to his death, was an organic whole; each successive phase grew inevitably from all that had gone before. It was the same with his teaching, and necessarily the same, for the uniqueness and the eternal validity of his teaching lay in the fact that it was lived.

That a great teacher should live his teaching is really an unfamiliar conception at a time when the divorce between the intellectual consciousness and the instinctive being has become extreme. For the meaning we naturally attach to the idea that a teacher should live his teaching, is that he should live *up* to his teaching. That conception itself has meaning only in relation to a condition of divorce between knowledge and being. But Jesus had overcome this divorce; when he first entered human history, he had already attained to a new condition of wholeness. On that attainment his teaching and his life were based. Therefore no conceptions which are derived from the condition of divorce can serve to define them. The conceptions belong

to a different and a lower category than the thing defined.

Jesus did not live up to his teaching: he lived it. There is no sign of effort or of strain in what we know of his teaching, or of his life as a teacher. Effort and strain had been in the past before his teaching began: they were to be again in his brief life as Messiah-to-be. But Jesus the teacher and Jesus the Messiah are distinct.

They are distinct; but they cannot be separated. The living historical Jesus inevitably became Messiah. To understand that inevitability is a prime necessity if we are to understand Jesus at all. But, when we have understood his life as a single whole, then with the knowledge of its unity present to our minds we must turn back upon it, and distinguish between the teaching and the Messiahship of Jesus.

Jesus the teacher and Jesus the Messiah are distinct. It would be bitter indeed for mankind were it not so. Jesus became Messiah because he was not only a teacher of an ultimate wisdom, but also rejected and a Jew. There was no place for a teacher of his knowledge and his authority in a Jewish vision of things save as Messiah. Had Jesus been born of another people at another time, he would still have been essentially the same Jesus; but his way of conceiving himself, and perhaps his destiny, would have been different. But Jesus was a man born of a certain nation, at a certain time in the world process. He had to fit himself into the world-conception of

his race. By the very fact that his teaching shattered the world-conception of his race, he was bound to claim for himself a position at once supreme in Jewry and completely detached from Jewry. There was but one such position – the Messiah.

Jesus, as a Jew, could be only Messiah. When he had become conscious of his isolation, there was no other place for him to take. He was more than a prophet, and he knew it. But Jesus the Jew no longer directly concerns mankind. What concerns mankind, to-day more than ever before, is Jesus the teacher.

But Jesus the teacher is far more than the angelic doctor of lovely precepts conceived by the liberalism of the nineteenth century. Jesus discovered and taught a final wisdom; and this wisdom was such that it could be declared only by being lived. Therefore it can be learned from him only as a person. It is necessary to know the Jesus who went to his death to become Messiah in order that we may know Jesus the teacher; unless we understand his death we shall never fully understand his teaching. But this is not because his death was implicit in his teaching; but because his teaching was implicit in his life. We have to know the loneliness, the courage, the human perfection of the man, in order to approach the living reality of what he taught. For the teaching of Jesus was a teaching of life through life.

Nevertheless, though it is true that the teaching of Jesus can be truly apprehended only through his

life and death, it remains true that Jesus the teacher and Jesus the Messiah are distinct. Inseparable in fact, but distinct in significance. Jesus, having his knowledge, because he was a Jew, became to himself Messiah; not his Messiahship therefore but his knowledge holds the primary significance. In order that his eternal knowledge could be expressed in the time and place in which he lived, he had to take upon himself a unique position. As his knowledge was unique, so his position must also be unique.

But it was, in fact, an accident that his knowledge was unique. He did not expect it; for him it was indeed a bitter tragedy. He had no desire that his should be a lonely knowledge: on the contrary, his consuming desire was that all men should share it. No one did, no one could; he was born too many years before his time: the knowledge that he hoped to share remained with him alone. Therefore he conceived for himself a lonely majesty to correspond with his lonely knowledge, and steeled himself to his destiny. That was the best, the only thing that he could do: but it was, even for himself, a sublime *pis-aller*, a hazard which failed. Jesus taught a knowledge for men to understand; if men had understood, he would never have become Messiah.

Here, therefore, at the parting of the ways, marked by his secret assumption of Messiahship at Cæsarea, is the moment when we must seek to gather up into a unity the teaching of Jesus. Hitherto it has been presented in some sort of historical sequence, as it

grew from the ineffable moment when Jesus was conscious of loving union with God: but the historical sequence cannot be preserved. There is no evidence on which to build. Relatively much of Jesus' teaching was remembered, but few of the occasions. The brave attempt of Luke to provide historical settings for many of Jesus' sayings is one that no modern writer can dare to emulate.

The central conception of Jesus as teacher is the conception of the Kingdom of God. At all times he conceived the Kingdom of God under two aspects: objectively, as a mysterious condition of existence which was to descend upon the universal world – the actual reign of God – and, subjectively, as a condition of existence to be achieved by the individual within himself. The relation between these two conditions was simple. The man who achieved the new condition within himself would be, and would know that he would be, a partaker of the new condition when it overtook the universe.

The establishment of the objective condition in the universe, which we call, for mere distinction's sake, the Reign of God, was not a new idea in the Jewish religion. On the contrary, it was an old one; and it was one of the most living religious ideas of the pious Jew when Jesus began his ministry. Sometimes the Reign of God was understood materially, as a triumph of Israel, with God for their King, over all the nations of the earth; sometimes with a high

degree of spirituality, as in the belief (not held by Paul alone) that the Jews were the chosen nation only in the sense that they had received 'the oracles of God.' Thus their partaking of the Reign of God depended upon their obedience to those oracles. Obviously such a conception was capable of a profound spiritual significance, and in the mind of the highly spiritual Jew the triumph of Israel over the nations might well become little less than the ultimate union of the world under the immediate sovereignty of God.

Between the world as it was and the Reign of God clearly a gulf was fixed. The religious imagination of the Jew was busy, in the years immediately before the birth of Christ, in striving to bridge the gulf: to fill it, so to speak, with a picture of the mighty transition. The picture thus created was Eschatology, the science of the Last Things. It had no firm outlines, it was still in actual process of creation when Jesus appeared. Jesus himself was to give it a transcendent form. So that, to a certain but very limited extent, those are right who would regard Jesus as the great eschatological prophet. He was that, indeed, but that was the less important part of him.

Though the outlines of the picture of last things were vague and variable, certain things in it were fixed: above all, the coming of a supernatural figure called Messiah, and the judgment of the world by him. This judgment was essential, for only those

who had by their lives deserved the reward could be partakers of the Reign of God: the others must be swept away. Again, the general belief was agreed that a forerunner would come to announce the advent of Messiah, and that this forerunner would be Elijah.

All this Jesus, as prophet, accepted: these were to him the conditions of the objective manifestation of the Reign of God. As teacher, he was not greatly concerned with them; as prophet and as Messiah-to-be, he was. As teacher, he was above all concerned with the attainment by the individual man of the subjective Kingdom of God. If this were achieved, the Last Things could take care of themselves: the members of the Kingdom of God could be *sure* of partaking of the Reign of God. Indubitably Jesus believed, when he began his ministry, that the Reign of God was imminent. But the prime importance to him of that impending cosmic revolution was that it made unspeakably urgent the achievement of the Kingdom of God within the individual that he might partake of the Reign of God. It was a call upon him to change his mind and soul.

Much and grievous misunderstanding of Jesus' teaching has been caused by rendering Jesus' call for a change of mind and soul as a call for 'repentance.' 'Repentance' is ultimately a Pauline conception, which depends for its force upon an extreme consciousness of sin. The word, and above all the

consciousness behind the word, has no real place in Jesus' thought or teaching, which was profoundly different and quite differently profound from Paul's. It was of another and a higher order.

The achievement of the Kingdom of God in the individual was for Jesus supereminently a natural process. It was a passing-beyond the condition of strain and effort. There were, for him, three stages in the life of man: the unconscious life of the child, the conscious life of the man, and the new life of the member of the Kingdom. In the unconscious life of the child there was spontaneity and wholeness; in the conscious life of the man there was inhibition and division; in the new life of the member of the Kingdom, there was spontaneity and wholeness once more. Jesus taught, in the fullest sense of the word, the necessity and possibility of rebirth, not in the narrow and sectarian meaning, but with a new positiveness. The Pauline conception of unsleeping war between the soul and the body would have been abhorrent to him. Wholeness and spontaneity – these were the marks of the member of the Kingdom.

This is the meaning of his singular insistence that children are by nature and birthright members of the Kingdom, and therefore examples of the change that must overtake men; and unless the attainment of the Kingdom within the individual can be conceived as the entry into a new condition of wholeness, wherein after a period of separation, knowing

and being are once more at one, the significance of Jesus' teaching cannot be apprehended. 'To do the will of God,' for instance, meant for Jesus something very different from what is generally understood by the words. For Jesus, the will of the reborn man was *identical* with the will of God. There was no effort: it was no question of keeping commandments. 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, therefore man is lord also of the Sabbath.' The keeping of commandments, even of the two commandments which for Jesus comprehended the whole of the Law, was not so much insufficient as irrelevant. The member of the Kingdom did the will of God because he embodied the will of God.

The crucial reference for the teaching of 'the mystery of the Kingdom of God' is the fourth chapter of Mark. If it be accepted that Mark's gospel is based upon the reminiscences of Peter, the fundamental importance of that chapter, in itself obvious, is immeasurably enhanced. There is singularly little of Jesus' teaching in Mark's gospel; and the significance of the one chapter that is wholly devoted to it is increased accordingly. We may conclude that Peter believed that the real essence of Jesus' message was contained therein.

The immediately striking features of the chapter are, first, that the parables in it are wholly concerned with the sowing and growing of seed; and, second, that these parables are accompanied by some of the

hardest of all Jesus' sayings. After speaking the parable of the Sower to the crowd at large, and ending with the almost esoteric formula, 'He that can understand, let him understand,' Jesus was asked for an explanation. He gave it, and the explanation, unlike other explanations of parables in the gospels, is palpably authentic. But Jesus was plainly disappointed with the failure of his disciples to comprehend the first of his parables of the mystery of the Kingdom. 'You do not understand this parable! How then will you understand the rest of the parables?' And, again, after giving his explanation, he said:

'Is a lamp brought to be put under a basket or a bed? Is it not to be put on a lamp-stand?

'For there is nothing hidden except to be revealed; nor is anything mysterious except to be made plain.

'He that can understand, let him understand.'

That is to say – surely, the meaning is unmistakable – that if Jesus spoke mysteriously, it was because he could no other. In his strange parables, his mysterious words, was a light, an aid to direct comprehension; and in them he used his light as a light should be used, not to make things dark, but to make them clear. He went on:

'Take care what you understand. For with the measure with which you measure, it shall be measured to you again, and more added. For to him that hath, it shall be given; and from him that

hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.'

It is clear that the two sayings, of which one is indeed hard, express, with the parallelism of Hebrew poetry, the same meaning; it is also clear that the saying, 'With what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you again, and more added,' whatever may be its application in other and later contexts, has here, in its original place, nothing to do with conduct. Jesus is not telling his disciples to take care what they do, but to take care what they hear; he is saying that in proportion to their understanding of his words they shall be recompensed, but not equally – more shall be given to them as a free gift. Likewise the saying, 'To him that hath, it shall be given; and from him that hath not it shall be taken, even that which he hath,' applies not to money, but to the same thing, namely understanding. These two grim sayings – and they are grim – have precisely the same meaning. If a man have a spark of understanding, it will be made a flame: if he have no spark, he is condemned for ever to darkness.

But understanding of *what*? That is clear: the understanding of 'the mystery of the Kingdom of God,' which he sought to make clear in his parables of sowing and of seed. And the parables precisely fit the dark sayings. There is the sower who went forth to sow, and some of his seed fell on good ground and brought forth some *thirty*, *some sixty*, *some a hun-*

dredfold. . . . 'To him that hath, it shall be *given*. . . . With the measure wherewith you measure, it shall be measured to you again, and *more added*.' There is a natural, yet miraculous growth in the soul of him who is able to receive the Word. Again, 'The Kingdom of God is as when a man casts seed on the earth, and sleeps by night and wakes by day, and the seed sprouts and shoots up – *he knows not how*. . . . *Of itself* the earth bears fruit, first the green leaf, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.' Let but the seed be given its earth in the human soul, and the growth follows, inevitable, incommensurable, by no act of the man. Again, the Kingdom is like a grain of mustard-seed, the smallest seed of all, yet it leaps up and becomes a tree which birds may roost in.

It is not really possible to mistake Jesus' meaning: he is speaking of the human soul and the knowledge of the mystery of the Kingdom of God. If a man can understand a little, he will understand all – swiftly, but naturally. No arduous intellectual effort is necessary, nor will it avail him. Given the gleam of understanding, full comprehension follows, not of the man himself. It happens: without the gleam nothing happens at all.

But *what* is the mystery? That Jesus himself could not expound. It was a true mystery, and he called it by that name. But the mystery of the Kingdom of God is the mystery of the Fatherhood of God – the vast and loving indifference of the Creator. To know

this mystery a rebirth of the individual man is necessary: rebirth and knowledge go hand in hand. This knowledge is therefore either meaningless or true; but, if a man understands, the understanding is wonderful. Suddenly, he catches a glimpse, and it shines 'like a treasure hid in a field which when a man finds he goes joyfully and sells all that he has to buy that field.'

In Jesus' teaching the rebirth of the individual man was a birth into a knowledge of God as Father. Apart from this rebirth, God could not be known; to know him was to know him as Father. Therefore to assert or deny the Fatherhood of God, without experience of this rebirth, is to utter empty words. Only those who have become God's sons can know him as Father. This is the real meaning of the famous sentence: 'No man knoweth the Son but the Father, nor the Father save the Son.' It is probable, and it has been supposed in the previous narrative, that these words were spoken at a moment when Jesus had realized that his teaching of rebirth had been rejected, and he had no choice but to believe himself the only actual son of God; but it is certain that the knowledge of God as Father which he claimed for himself was unique only by bitter accident. He taught that potentially all men were God's sons in precisely the same sense as he: the tragedy was that they refused to realize their potentialities.

To be reborn was to know God the Father with

the same immediate knowledge that Jesus had achieved. But what was it – to know God as Father? Unfortunately, unless a man has felt in himself the need, and touched in himself the experience, of rebirth, it is impossible to convey to him even an inkling of the content of this knowledge, concerning which Jesus himself spoke the inexorable sentence: 'To him that hath, it shall be given, and from him that hath not it shall be taken away even that which he hath.' But, although there was in Jesus' experience of God a quality peculiar to himself, an ineffable sweetness of personal reunion, which directly derived from the personal quality of Jesus himself, the *kind* of the experience was not unique: it can be paralleled exactly from the experience of great saints and great poets. Fundamentally, it was an act of profound obeisance to the apprehended wonder and beauty of the universe – a sudden and for ever incontrovertible seeing that all things have their place and purpose in a great harmony. This is the meaning of Jesus' words:

'Love your enemies, and pray for them that do you harm. That thus ye may be sons of your Father: for he makes his sun to rise upon good men and bad, and his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust.'

The utterance is crucial, for it reveals that to know the Father is to know, and to be filled with love for, the power which makes the distinction between good

men and bad, just and unjust. The power which created the ineffable harmony of good and evil in the world created it with the surpassing love of the great Demiurge: and those who can for a moment see the universe with the Father's eyes, must love it with his love.

It is manifest that a command to show love of the kind enjoined by Jesus in that sentence cannot be obeyed, except by the reborn man. In order to be sons of the Father, men must know the Father; in order to love like the Father, they must know how the Father loves; in order 'to be perfect' like the Father, they must know how the Father is perfect. Jesus' teaching of conduct is therefore in the main an enunciation of the spontaneous acts of the reborn man. When he sought to reduce it into the form of commandments, it was comprised in two simple ones which, being commands to love, are impossible to obey. No man can love either God or his neighbour by taking thought; nor is love an end in itself to be pursued. Indeed, it cannot be pursued without falsity. And again, it is utterly impossible to separate loving one's neighbour from its first source, in loving God; until you can love your neighbour with God's love, you cannot really love him; until you know God you cannot know what his love is. The loving of men which can exist apart from the knowing of God is not love, as Jesus meant it, at all. The man who knows God, knows immediately that he must forgive his enemies; and the man who does not know,

immediately, that he must not resist evil, does not know God.

Of this order is most of Jesus' teaching of conduct: it is a *description* of the spontaneous and necessary acts of the man reborn into membership of the Kingdom and knowledge of fatherhood of God. Men were to be reborn into a new condition of being in which they naturally did the will of God; as one thus reborn, Jesus spoke and performed the will of God. If we conceive rebirth as the creation of a living and unbroken unity between the member of the Kingdom and God himself, we can distinguish two kinds in Jesus' teaching of conduct: he enjoined not only acts which were the fruit of this union between man and God, but also acts which should remove obstacles to this union. He declared what men did when they were reborn; and declared also what men must do if they desired to be reborn.

To the latter kind belongs his unmistakable teaching concerning possessions, which can indeed be mistaken only by those whose chief concern is not to expound but to make palatable Jesus' teaching. He again and again demanded the complete abandonment of all possessions: not because of any evil inherent in money as such, but because wealth was a mighty obstacle in the way of union with God. It is the fashion among commentators to speak of the injunction to absolute poverty as 'the Ebionite heresy.' But who declared the Ebionites heretical? Not Jesus.

Nevertheless, it would be foreign to the spirit of Jesus' teaching to press the injunction to poverty in isolation. Not the possession of wealth so much as the attachment to wealth was what he denounced. 'You cannot *serve* God and Mammon.' And Jesus believed that the possession of wealth almost inevitably involved attachment to it, and consequently an inability to receive and respond to the teaching of the Kingdom. In the parable of the Sower the 'deceit of riches' is represented as among the influences most hostile to an understanding of the mystery of the Kingdom.

But wealth is but one form of attachment to the unregenerate life. Jesus no less peremptorily enjoined the dissolution of far more precious attachments, the abandonment of home and family. And it would be dishonest to mitigate the injunction. Jesus evidently believed that a complete severance from all attachments whatsoever was a necessary preliminary of complete rebirth. We know he had chosen this path himself, and we know the result that was obtained thereby; we may understand therefore why Jesus' teaching of this necessity is extreme. He demands that, in order to prepare the way for the union of complete suffusion by God, a man should 'hate his father and his mother, aye and even his own life'; he demands, if need should be, even physical mutilation. 'If thine eye is an obstacle, pluck it out and cast it from thee. . . .'

But it is all-important to realize that this ruthless rejection of all attachments is simply a means to the great end – the preparation of the good soil into which the mystery of the Kingdom may be received, and the swift and sudden growth into the knowledge that God is Father and men his sons. There is an ascetic side to Jesus' teaching; but this asceticism is as it were the preliminary technique of attainment. The goal once attained the element of self-constraint immediately disappears; as Jesus fasted in the Wilderness, but never again. A new, rich spontaneity of life is achieved: the living water wells upward from the depths and flows gaily through the newborn man; in this newness of life attachments are not refused, the condition of attachment becomes simply impossible. The reborn son of God moves with an utter freedom through the worldly life. He does not need to hold himself aloof from it. No tension of the will, nor rigour of denial is required of him. He is become simply incapable of attachments, because he is become wholly the living and conscious instrument of God's will. God has gained a new organ of expression, therefore his son's mere living is secured to him by God, and mere living – the maintenance of his physical body as the perfect organ of God's will – is all that he needs or desires.

'Do not go seeking for food and drink, and do not worry. It is the pagans of the world who set their minds on these. But your Father knows that you

need them. Seek for his Kingdom, and these things shall be given you also.'

The famous passage to which these words are the conclusion, 'Take no thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat and what ye shall drink,' has in it not the faintest tinge of ascetic rigour. It is a description of the life of an achieved member of the Kingdom, not a command to abnegation as a means of entering it. The asceticism of Jesus' teaching applies only to the period of preparation; the preparation past, and rebirth achieved, the asceticism also is past, and the care-free life begins. For the new-born son the essentials of life are provided by God: he becomes one with the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. He sups joyfully with tax-gatherers and sinners, he gladly receives the harlot's perfume and loves the gift for 'a thing of beauty,' he is to the eye of ascetic rigour 'a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber.' He lives, to outward seeming, at all adventure; he absolutely rejects all rules and ordinances; he fasts or feasts at his own sweet will, which is the sweet will of God. The member of the Kingdom is *an absolutely free man*, because he is absolutely obedient to God's will; and it is possible for him to be thus absolutely obedient because, by the preliminary abandonment of all attachments, he has made himself perfectly responsive to the voice of God.

Forgiveness, love, non-resistance to evil – these follow as the night the day in the new condition.

The secret of it is that 'You must be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.' Man becomes one with God: just as God makes his sun rise on the evil man and the good, so the son of God loves the evil man and the good alike. He sees, as with God's own eyes, that these things must be so and not otherwise; and that the goodness which denies evil, and rules directly to destroy it, is not goodness at all, for it is not in accord with that perfection of God which has created evil and good alike.

True goodness has, so to speak, a radiance which evil cannot resist, but it has and can have no deliberately destructive activity, even against evil. When the perfect tolerance of God is achieved by man, evil will cease to be.

Therein we touch the secret centre of Jesus' profoundest teaching: it is no less than that man must *be* God. It is the highest and the truest wisdom ever taught to men; and of the man who lived it is no mystery that his followers should have come to believe that he was God made man. And, even to-day, there are only two things that can be believed about Jesus by those who can see the facts at all. Either Jesus was God made man, or he was man made God. It is easier and less exacting to believe the former: but the latter is the truth.

Perhaps it is unnecessary to say more concerning Jesus' teaching of the subjective attainment of the Kingdom of God. The teaching is, and was avowed

by Jesus himself to be, either self-evident or incomprehensible. But it is necessary to insist that there was from the beginning a vital connection between the subjective attainment of the Kingdom, and the objective establishment of the Reign, of God. The imminence of the Reign of God is everywhere presupposed in Jesus' teaching. The attainment of the subjective Kingdom carried with it the certainty of sharing in the objective Reign. The single phrase, the Kingdom of God, was used by Jesus in both meanings: and those are wholly wrong who would interpret it rigidly in one sense or the other. The meaning of the phrase is always apparent from the context. What is evident is that the profound originality of Jesus' teaching lies in his subjective teaching.

For, as we have said, the belief in the imminence of the objective Reign of God was by no means new in Jewish religion. John the Baptist had proclaimed it, and Jesus had followed him. Jesus had, so to speak, inherited from John the certainty that God's judgment was near at hand. Into the form of this inherited certainty he poured a new knowledge, of the nature of God and his Judgment, and of the means by which a man could make himself secure of God's Judgment. Thus, inevitably, the nature of the Reign of God was completely changed from what it had been to John the Baptist: it was changed from the transcendental theocracy established through the stern and awful judgment of God's Messiah into the blessed company of reborn and

reunited sons of God. The Judgment was indeed still to come, but men had now, if they would but hear the glad tidings, a means of knowing beyond all doubt that they would be received in joy by a loving Father.

Therefore Jesus could truly say that John the Baptist had no part in the Kingdom of God: he did not know what it was.

'Verily, I tell you: among men born of woman there has not arisen a greater than John the Baptist. But the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he.'

And a yet subtler and more profound distinction was to follow.

'From the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of God suffers violence, and violent men seize it to themselves. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied up to John. And if you can receive it, this is Elijah that was to come. He that hath ears let him hear!'

With the reference to John as the forerunner of himself, now become Messiah-to-be, which dates the saying as belonging to the time at Cæsarea Philippi, we are not now concerned. But the 'violence' that was being done to the Kingdom of God from the days of John until the moment of Jesus' speaking, was the violence done to it by Jesus and those who understood his teaching. By achieving the Kingdom within themselves, they compelled the coming of the Reign. This may appear a violent argument; but,

of course, it is not an *argument*. The attainment of union with God, as of a son with a Father, was in itself the guarantee that this condition was on the brink of perpetuation. The true disciple of Jesus, as it were, tasted already the joys of the eternal Kingdom, and with them the certainty that its establishment for ever was but a matter of days. Thus, the member of the Kingdom, who comprehended the mystery of the Kingdom, compelled its coming. John the Baptist could only wait for it.

Therefore John belonged to the old order, the past dispensation; he was reckoned with the Law and the Prophets. For all his greatness Jesus reckoned him as making one in the essential with the Pharisees who asked when the Kingdom would come: to whom he declared:

'The Kingdom of God will not come by watching for it; nor will men say, "Here it is!" or "There it is." For, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.'

That did not mean, at all, for Jesus, that the Kingdom of God was only within men, purely subjective; but that the objective event could only be brought to pass by the subjective attainment.

Because Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom was thus rooted in subjectivity it has an eternal validity. No earthly disappointment can touch it. The Kingdom of God which has not come is the Kingdom which comes by watching: it will never come. The only Kingdom of God which can come is that which Jesus taught: and, if in the fullness of time it comes

indeed, it will have come precisely as he taught that it would come, by the sacred 'violence' which men will have done to it, and to themselves.

This was Jesus' only *teaching* of the Kingdom. It belongs to his ministry before Cæsarea Philippi: after Cæsarea Philippi he spoke differently concerning it, because he was then no longer a teacher, but the chosen Judge of humankind. He had found that men would not listen to his teaching, or if they would listen, could not understand. They would not, they could not, by their own attainment, compel the Kingdom to come. There was nothing for it: Jesus alone unaided, uncomprehended, would pluck down the Kingdom for them. He had waited for the Messiah in vain; now he would *be* Messiah, and men's Judge. No more sublime purpose has been conceived by the human mind than that which Jesus conceived when he made the Messiah – himself; and he not only conceived this purpose, but followed and endured it to the end. And if we need to seek for motives of this supreme dedication of himself, we shall find the deepest in his title and his words in the sentence: 'The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.' What men would not and could not receive from him as teacher, he would force upon them by becoming God's Messiah.

It could not be done. He was not God's Messiah, and at the last he knew it. But that a teacher of wisdom should have had the loving courage of that

attempt to fathom and forestall the inscrutable purposes of God is an event in the history of mankind which even to-day has scarcely begun its full work upon the minds and souls of men. That final, deliberate act of sublime imagination and lonely heroism, absolutely differentiates the teaching of Jesus from that of other profound teachers of mankind. The teaching of Jesus is not his teaching only: it is his life and death.

Nevertheless, to understand it, we must keep distinct Jesus the teacher and Jesus the Saviour; we must remember always that it was only because of men's blindness of soul and hardness of heart that Jesus became the Saviour. And if we insist on regarding him as the Saviour, we become like the Pharisees who expected salvation as an external event. True, Jesus tried to give it thus to men who could not take it otherwise: but he knew at the last, as he had known at the beginning, that it could not be given save 'to him that hath.'

Nor can the conception of Jesus as Saviour and the teaching of Jesus ever be truly reconciled: for Jesus taught that the member of the Kingdom entered into an immediate relation to God. Therefore the idea that this relation should be mediated strikes at the very heart of his teaching. That Jesus himself did verily lay down his life to mediate it, that he did in fact succeed, in another way than any he had dreamed, in mediating it, does not affect the truth that he chose this path as a counsel of despair – a sublime

pis-aller. To put the matter simply, to one who does veritably acknowledge the truth of Jesus' teaching, Jesus cannot be more than fellow-son or brother. Greatest of brothers, first of sons, no doubt: but the moment he becomes different in nature from fellow-son or brother, what he taught as teacher is denied.

And it is not possible to understand the teaching of Jesus and to deny it. To understand it is to accept it: it is either meaningless or true. It is, essentially, an *obvious* teaching. But obvious only to those who have in them a gleam of knowledge of the condition of life which it promises and from which it springs. 'To him that hath it shall be given; and from him that hath not it shall be taken away even that which he hath,' is really a definition of the nature of the knowledge which Jesus taught. It is a knowledge which can be apprehended only through a change in the learner's being. To understand the teaching of the Kingdom, a man must already be of the Kingdom.

Futile, therefore, to attempt to expound the teaching of Jesus in detail. All that may be done is to indicate, as we have tried to do, the living centre from which alone it can be apprehended in its spontaneous beauty of truth. If a single word must be found to describe his teaching, it shall be this word 'spontaneous.' Indeed, if the significance of this word 'spontaneous,' applied to a fully conscious human being, be understood, the teaching itself is understood. It is a teaching of a profound and final

human wisdom: therefore it is spontaneous: for spontaneity is the consummation of wisdom.

In other words, Jesus' teaching is, and is eternal because it is, a teaching of life. Life cannot be taught, it can only be lived and known. Those alone understand the teaching of Jesus who know that it is not teaching at all, but simply the living utterance of one who had achieved rebirth into a new condition of life. Its purpose is to create this new life in others, and in those who have ears to hear it new life is immediately born. Whether Jesus himself spoke, or the author of the Fourth Gospel imagined them, the secret of Jesus' teaching is in the words: 'I came that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly.' The teaching of Jesus is a gay teaching, as all teaching of life must be: good news, indeed: a promise of infinite riches: 'Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and all these things shall be added unto you.'

PART III

I

THE JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

From Cæsarea Philippi, where the great decision was taken by himself and confirmed by God, Jesus went straight to his journey's end – Jerusalem and death. He had a choice of roads before him: either to take the road east of Jordan, through Decapolis and Herod's tetrarchy of Peræa; or to take the road west of Jordan, through Galilee and Samaria. Both were dangerous: on either hand he must pass through Herod's territory.

For himself, and a few inner disciples, he chose the latter; and it seems that others with the bulk of his Galilean followers – perhaps a few hundreds – took the common pilgrim road through Peræa to meet him again at the Jordan ford not far from Jericho.

He passed through Galilee concealed; yet he could not resist the desire to revisit for the last time his second home, 'the house' at Capernaum. On the road thither he told his disciples once more of his coming suffering – that he must be betrayed to death. 'But they could not understand,' says Mark, 'and they were afraid to ask him.'

'So they came to Capernaum,' Mark continues. 'And when he was in the house, he asked them: "What were you disputing about on the road?" '

There are no more pregnant words, in any his-

tory, than these bare and naïve sentences of Mark. Jesus did not know what his disciples had been disputing: he had been walking, silent and alone, on the road ahead of them: only the murmur of their petulant voices had reached him. They were afraid to speak to him; now he was become a being apart, whom they could no longer approach as in the old days. They could not understand his words: he had told them that he was to be betrayed.

That was new. Not that they did not understand it because it was new; they understood nothing of him now. But now for the first time Jesus spoke of his betrayal.

Was it a new thought that came to him as he strode ahead? Had he chosen betrayal, and his betrayer? The more one reads the gospel narrative, the more certain it seems that Jesus' betrayal and the manner and the agent of it were predetermined by himself.

Jesus had deliberately chosen the way of suffering and death; it was forced upon him by his consciousness of what he was. There was no place for the solitary son of God upon this earth, nor for a living Messiah in the world. Having chosen his ineluctable destiny, he made his face rigid to go to Jerusalem. He had chosen to die in Jerusalem, and to die at the feast of the Passover. He would be the sacrificial lamb of his people and of the world: 'as the sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he would open not his mouth.'

It was an unparalleled imagination. Two thousand years of history, through which its appeal to the soul of Western men has never been diminished, vindicate it as man's supreme achievement. That through the centuries it has been understood in a way a modern mind can no longer understand it as the self-sacrifice of God himself incarnate is of little moment: formulations change, but the spiritual verity is the same. What the devout Christian has worshipped in the God-man, we can revere in the man-God. He could not believe that a man was capable of so supreme an imagination; we can. That is the only difference. We understand the old forms: the spiritual verity shines through them for any man to see. But we know – simply because we belong to the twentieth century and must not reject our birthright – that the old forms are *forms*. We see their beauty and their necessity. The man who sees nothing in the great Christian dogmas but illusion and error, is blind indeed.

The Christian verity is a statement of this sublime imagination and act of the man Jesus. Two thousand years ago it appeared to those who contemplated it so sublime that it must be the imagination and the act of God. So, in the final contemplation, it was. In Jesus God was manifest as he has never since been manifest in man: but manifest in him, because he was wholly man. God is not manifest otherwise; he does not exist save in all the particularity of creation. Jesus was the supreme manifestation of God simply

because he was the supreme manifestation of Man.

Faith in the God-man, knowledge of the man-God – both spring alike from contemplation of the imagination and act of the man Jesus. One is the response of a soul which says: No *man* could have conceived or done this thing; the other the response of the soul which says: No one but a man could have conceived or done it. Both are true. But the former truth belongs to the past; the latter to the future.

Yet see how close they come. For the believer in the God-man, the passion and the manner of Jesus was predetermined by God; for the believer in the man-God it was predetermined by himself. But for both alike *predetermined*. That is the essential. On this essential predetermination of his passion all rationalist lives of Jesus are wrecked. It is for the rationalist an element imported into the story by after-generations to correspond with their belief in his Godhead: for the rationalist and the liberal, Jesus is, however kindly they may put it, only the fanatic who lost his life at the head of a heretical and revolutionary movement. He did not, because he could not, predetermine the manner and day of his death. He could not do this because he was only a man. And for the rationalist and the liberal 'only a man' means 'only a man like me.' What they could not do, he could not do. Never was there yet a liberal or a rationalist life of Jesus that did not end on a note of sympathetic condescension: he did this, and it was very beautiful, but we understand better.

We do not understand better. To look for a liberal Jesus is mistaken. But it is mistaken, also, to do as the eschatologist and put him into an abyss of darkness, with the assurance that we cannot understand him. Understanding is not the faculty by which Jesus can be known: but intuition. We have to seize in act a greater spirit than our own, we have to pluck from the future, the man of the future. Jesus can be reached, if he can be reached at all, through the man of genius alone. But he will never be *understood*.

Jesus was not a fanatic who lost his life in a heretical movement. He was a new kind of man, who was inexorably driven by reason of his new faculties to believe himself the only son of God, and to seek the only death that was fitting for such a one. The manner of that death he predetermined for his own great ends. He was able to predetermine it because he was a man of new faculties and new powers.

To die at Jerusalem, as the Paschal Lamb, was not an easy thing to accomplish. At Jerusalem was a Roman procurator and a Roman garrison, ready indeed to do Roman justice upon him were he to appear as an enemy of the civil power. But what had he to do with the civil power? He was deliberately indifferent to it. And as for placing himself in a position in which he should die as a common criminal nothing could be more alien from his purpose. His purpose was to die as the suffering Messiah.

To proclaim himself openly as Messiah would be

fatal. He would be condemned not as Messiah, but as a common factionary. There had been Messiahs before in Jewish history, would-be restorers of Israel on earth: and Roman justice had been done upon them. Jesus was an utterly different Messiah – unthinkable to Jewish expectation and harmless to the Roman. The Messiah that he was was completely beyond the comprehension of even his own disciples. He could not openly proclaim himself that Messiah; it would be only a derision and a blasphemy.

How then was he to achieve his purpose? There was no way but the one he chose, by the intuition of genius. His secret Messiahship should be betrayed at his own appointed time to the rulers of Jerusalem: at the last moment, when it had been placed secure beyond all doubt that he was no leader of an earthly Israel. Till the day came he would preach and teach his own message in Jerusalem. When the day came his chosen disciple should betray his secret to his enemies. Till the day came they should find no cause of action against him. When the day came his fate would be certain. He would be condemned as the Messiah, but as the Messiah of a spiritual Israel, and he would die as the Paschal Lamb.

He needed but one man: one to betray him. Judas of Kerioth is lost for ever in the darkness of history. His memory has been blotted out. Yet, even by the believers in the God-man, the name of Judas should have been revered as the name of the man by whose hand God's sacrifice was made pos-

sible. For a believer in the man-God Judas stands next to Jesus himself in the great story. For he, when all were without understanding, must have understood. Perhaps not all, but something. Whether Jesus knew his weakness, or discovered his strength; whether he was the unconscious instrument or the conscious partner in Jesus' purpose, must remain for ever hidden. The man who betrayed Jesus and hanged himself in sorrow, judged by the commonest measure, was a man, and perhaps more a man than the disciples who left their master and fled, or than Peter who denied him thrice.

From the bare facts of the synoptic story we are forced to conclude an understanding between Jesus and Judas. Had Judas been simply a common traitor, why should he have chosen the precise moment that Jesus desired and his enemies would have avoided for his treachery? Why did he bend himself so faithfully to Jesus' purpose? I have pondered the facts many times, and I find myself quite unable to believe that the moment of Jesus' death was due to mere coincidence. What I cannot believe myself, I cannot ask others to believe. I prefer to confess my own belief in a secret understanding between Jesus and Judas, and also to confess that to me there is nothing whatever shocking in this belief. Far from it: it satisfies my demand that Jesus should have worked out his great purpose like a great man. May it not be that when Jesus first spoke of the necessity of his

betrayal on the road to Capernaum, and his disciples 'did not understand his saying and were afraid to ask him,' one of them did understand, and bowed himself to the necessity of his great Master? His name has been darkened by Christian piety. How were men who could not understand Jesus' purpose to understand the nature of him who served it? And if this plea for Judas seems too strange for sufferance, let it be forgotten as the vagary of one man's imagination; but let it be remembered that Judas was more *necessary* to the great drama than any other of the Master's disciples.

'What were you disputing about on the road?' Jesus asked his followers when he entered, for the last time, the house in Capernaum.

They were silent. At least they had a sense of the incommensurability of their Master's thought and theirs. They were disputing which of them was the greatest in the Kingdom of God. The irony of it!

Jesus sat down and called a little child to him, and clasped him to him, and said:

'If anyone wishes to be first, he must be last of all and servant of all. Verily, I tell you, except you turn and become like little children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of God. Whoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the great one in the Kingdom of God.

'And whoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receives me. And whoever receives me,

receives not me, but him that sent me. But whoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were good that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the deeps of the sea.

'Woe to the world, because of offences. For it must be that offences come, but woe to the man through whom comes the offence.

'See that you despise not one of these little ones. For I tell you their angels in heaven do continually behold the face of the Father. Therefore it is not the will of the Father that one of these little ones should be lost.'

John said to him:

'Master, on the road we saw a man who was not a follower of ours casting out dæmons in your name. We forbade him, because he was not a follower.'

Jesus answered:

'Do not forbid him. For no man who does a work of power in my name can easily speak evil of me. He who is not against us is for us.'

It was enough for Jesus now that he should not be opposed and persecuted; he asked no more. The saying is perfectly in keeping with the enforced hiding of his brief passage through his native land.

From Galilee he made his way, perhaps with James and John for sole companions, through Samaria.

Of this journey through Samaria we know only Luke's story how in a certain village no house would take Jesus in because his face was set towards

Jerusalem; and how James and John, the naïve and clamorous pair, the 'sons of Thunder,' asked that they might call fire from heaven to destroy the villagers. Jesus 'turned and rebuked them; and they went to another village.'

The revelation of the gulf that yawned between Jesus' mind and the thoughts of his nearest disciples is terrible. How could these men have had the smallest gleam of comprehension of his purpose in going to die in Jerusalem, or have understood for a moment what manner of Messiah he was? It was not possible. For them he was a miracle-worker who was going to Jerusalem to work the greatest miracle of all. As by a wave of his potent wand, a marvellous kingdom would rise: the disciples in purple and fine linen would be the King's viceroys, and all their enemies would be defeated and slain.

Scarcely less crude than this were the visions of their minds while they walked behind their silent master. Not that they were confident: they were terribly afraid. The thing seemed so impossible. But it was far easier to believe in such an impossibility than in a Messiah who would be slain. As far as they might, they believed in it.

Who should be first, who greatest? was the incessant subject of their talk. Sometimes he turned to them to tell them that his was to be no earthly glory and no kingdom of gold and jasper. What was the use? What had Jesus to tell that could be understood by one who in his old age imagined the coming of

the Lord in the terms of the Book of Revelation? That was when John was old: what would the young imagination of John have been?

The words of Jesus to his disciples which were spoken on his journey to Jerusalem reveal his constant effort to disabuse his followers' minds of these crude expectations. He is represented as declaring to them on three different occasions that he would be condemned to death and killed, and on the third day he would rise again; and the disciples are represented as being bewildered by the saying, as not understanding its meaning, and as afraid to ask him. Two simple considerations make it evident that this prophecy was reshaped after the event. Not only would it have been impossible, even for the disciples, to misunderstand the simple statement that he would rise again in the body on the third day; but the conduct of his disciples after the crucifixion makes it certain that they had no such expectation. Contradictory as the narratives of the resurrection are, they agree in this one particular: that the disciples were completely unprepared for such an event. The three prophecies assigned to Jesus with the addition that the disciples did not understand them represent the naïve effort of the early Church at once to assert that Jesus prophesied his resurrection after three days and to explain away the awkward fact that the disciples had behaved as though his resurrection was inconceivable to them.

Jesus did not expect to be resurrected in the body

after three days. He expected something of a different order from bodily resurrection, and he expected this to come before he touched the extreme of bodily death. Moreover it would be exact to say that Jesus did not believe in bodily resurrection at all. He believed in resurrection: he believed that the human being would rise to a more glorious existence after death: but he did not believe in bodily resurrection. The meaning of his reply to the question of the Sadducees is unmistakable. In their crude conception of the resurrection as a resurrection of the physical body 'they were far astray, ignorant both of the Scriptures and the power of God. For when men rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are married, but are as angels in heaven.' By his phrase 'like angels in heaven,' Jesus was trying to describe another *order* of existence than the bodily. A glimpse of what the phrase meant to him may be had from his words concerning little children, that 'their angels do always behold the face of my Father in heaven.' This did not mean, as it is often interpreted, that little children had guardian angels. Little children were, for Jesus, as it were by nature, members of the Kingdom of God. They were beings who had not yet lost their birthright: they were single and whole. When they grew to man's estate, and the divided consciousness of the adult took hold of them, they lost their birthright. They could regain it only by being born again and so becoming sons of God and members of the Kingdom once

more. Beneath that simple and beautiful phrase concerning the children lies a deep spiritual wisdom, which sees the three great ages of man as the completeness and innocence of the child, the division and consciousness of estrangement of the man, and the regained completeness and innocence of the member of the Kingdom. The child and the son of the Kingdom alike behold, each through his angel, or spiritual part, the face of the Father; and the condition of being or having an angel was simply the condition of being in the presence of God. The ignorant who endow the angels of Jesus' sayings with bodily existence, and the clever who dismiss them as mere relics of an outworn creed, are alike 'far astray, not knowing the power of God.'

Jesus, from the beginning of his ministry to his death, was trying to express ineffable truths to simple people; and he expressed them with a simple profundity which has never been approached by another man. His incessant effort was to set aside precisely those crass interpretations which later generations, like the disciples themselves, have thrust upon his teaching. Just as to this day nine men out of ten cannot conceive the resurrection save as a resurrection of the physical body; just as the Church itself was founded on a physical interpretation of indubitable experiences of the continued presence of Jesus; so in Jesus' own lifetime his words were continually misunderstood. He had not only a conception, but a direct and continuous experience of another kind

of existence than the physical. This was his condition of being a son of God, or a member of the Kingdom of God. This condition could be attained, as he himself had attained it, here and now. But men would not; and because they would not, Jesus would, by his death and his return as Messiah, establish the condition for all men.

Jesus believed that at the very moment of his death, before the last spark of consciousness went out, he would be taken up, and pass wholly into this other order of existence. The articulate framework of his belief was derived from the Messianic expectation of his day: he thought in the terms of the age, but he knew a timeless knowledge. At the last his thought betrayed him, but not his knowledge: he had tried to express something which could not be expressed. But he came nearer than any man to expressing the ineffable.

There is little doubt that Jesus essayed the hopeless task of telling his disciples of his expectation. It is certain that he spoke to them dark words which they did not understand, whose meaning they did not dare to ask him. It must have been so. What those words were we can only guess. He was not to rise again from the dead after three days; he was both to die and not to die; at the moment of death he was to be taken up to sit on the right hand of God, whence he would come to judge both the quick and the dead. This did not happen as Jesus expected it to happen. But what the imagination of

the disciples hoped, against hope, to happen was almost a caricature of Jesus' own expectation. They expected, by some miraculous transfiguration, the establishment of a glorious kingdom on earth, in which the first places would be reserved for themselves.

This crude imagination Jesus sought at every opportunity to correct on his last journey. When the disciples would have prevented the little children from being brought to him, he was angry, and said:

'Let the children come to me: do not prevent them. For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as they. Truly I tell you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a child, shall never enter into it.' And he clasped them in his arms, and blessed them, laying his hands upon them.

It was not easy to understand; it never will be easy to understand: and even those who come near to understanding it often err in insisting upon an element of childishness. Not to the childish, but to the childlike and to the child, belongs the Kingdom: to those born whole, and to those reborn into wholeness. But the essential which Jesus sought to impress upon his disciples was that entry into the Kingdom was a condition and an experience. It is indeed to make the same mistake as did his disciples to imagine that this condition and this experience were but the qualification for entrance into the Kingdom. The condition and the experience were

all in all; but it followed of necessity that those who partook of it must enter into another order of existence. The Kingdom of God was, at one and the same time, a condition of soul within men, and an order of existence outside them, a universal order of a new world yet to be.

The story of the rich young man, which belongs to this same journey, has a like import. As Jesus took the road again from Capernaum the young man ran towards him and fell on his knees.

'Good Master,' he said, 'what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'

'Why do you call me good? No one is good save God. You know the commandments: Do no murder, Commit no adultery, Do not steal, Bear no false witness, Do no injustice, Honour your father and your mother.'

'All these commandments I have kept since a boy, Master!'

Jesus looked at him, and loved him.

'One thing is lacking. Go, sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: then come hither and follow me.'

His face fell at the word, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

Those are right who maintain that these words of Jesus contain no absolute injunction of poverty. It was indeed not the rejection of his wealth as such that was 'the one thing lacking' to the young man whom Jesus loved, but the rejection of his attachment to his

wealth. It was *possible* that a man might be rich and inherit eternal life; but yet in truth it was all but impossible. To have riches and not be attached to them; to keep possessions and yet be ready to surrender them at a word; to be wealthy and live as though one had no wealth at all – this was almost beyond human power. But if the young man had said, 'Master, I will,' Jesus would have called him back: to such a willingness the act was not necessary.

Jesus watched the young man going sadly away: then he said to his disciples:

'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God!'

He meant precisely what he said: that it was terribly hard for a rich man to attain that complete surrender to the will of God which was the sign of belonging to the Kingdom. His thought ran on:

'How hard it is to enter the Kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.'

Once more it was not an absolute impossibility that Jesus was proclaiming, even though it is in fact impossible for a camel to pass through a needle's eye; it was rather a task of superhuman difficulty, that no man should set himself. The disciples, says Mark, were completely astonished, and said to themselves, 'Who then can be saved?' Certainly it was not any declaration that it was impossible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom that thus astonished and perplexed them. Jesus had preached poverty often

enough, and they themselves were only poor peasants. There were plenty of poor to be blessed and saved. Their question was 'What rich man can be saved?' And this was the question which Jesus answered.

'With men it is impossible, but not with God. With God all things are possible.'

It was beyond the power of a man so to hold himself towards his riches as to be completely detached from them. Yet Jesus could not accept the thought that the young man whom he had looked on and loved should be excluded from the Kingdom. He as man could see no way for him: but God might. Nay, God would. For Jesus would become God's Deputy and Judge.

Peter said: 'See, we have left everything and followed you.'

Jesus answered the unspoken question:

'Truly, I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and the good news, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this world – houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands – with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. And many first shall be last, and many last first.'

Surely the irony is unmistakable, even though the sting has been duly removed by Matthew and Luke. A hundredfold – with persecutions. The Kingdom had nothing to do with rewards, either in this world

or the next: in the Kingdom all justice was transcended.

The thought is hard, perhaps almost as hard today after centuries of Christianity as it was when Jesus tried to make it clear to his disciples. They did not understand; not many after them have understood. It is easier to smile at the crudely material imaginations of James and John when they asked that one might sit on his right hand and the other on his left in his glory than to think how simple peasants could otherwise conceive the high knowledge of Jesus. And Jesus' answer is the only one: 'You do not know what you are asking for.'

It would be vain indeed to seek to determine how far Jesus gave to his knowledge and his expectation a material embodiment. To say what he desired to say, he had to appeal to a familiar scheme; but it is certain that the material elements of his teaching are precisely those which were exaggerated by the evangelists. The memory and the interpretation of Jesus' words are ultimately derived from those disciples whose lack of understanding he so often rebuked: to men who, after all Jesus' efforts to disabuse them, disputed to the last over the question which of them should be the greatest in the Kingdom. What is wonderful is not that Jesus' teaching should have been coarsened here and there, but that in the main the pure spirituality of his thought concerning the Kingdom should have been so astonishingly preserved. It was saved, we may guess, by its strange-

ness and its authority. The strangest of Jesus' words were those he uttered most evidently with the certainty of the son of God.

'You do not know what you are asking for,' he said to the importunate sons of Zebedee. 'Can you drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?'

'We can.'

'You shall drink the cup that I drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. But to sit on my right hand and my left is not mine to give, save to those for whom it has been prepared.'

There was for Jesus always an unknown element in the Kingdom. The Kingdom as condition he knew; the Kingdom as realization he did not know, and openly confessed his ignorance. He did not know how a rich man could enter it; he did not know the day on which it would be established by his coming as the Son of Man; he did not know who would sit on his right hand and his left. These were things that the Son did not know, only the Father. And yet, even of these three things that Jesus did not know, one became known to him. When he spoke his final parable of the Sheep and the Goats, he knew how a rich man could enter the Kingdom.

Therefore we may say, using a crude analogy, that Jesus knew, and came to know completely, the natural laws of the Kingdom; the only thing he did not know was the details of its realization. Or we

may say, perhaps more exactly, that he knew the Kingdom as the master-artist knows his masterpiece to be when he is on the brink of taking up his pen or his brush. He sees it wholly, perfectly with the eye of the soul; but the concrete vision which can come only when the work is achieved and done is denied him. And Jesus (if we may follow the image) stood now towards his disciples as the master-artist who should seek to explain his masterpiece to be, which earthly circumstance forbids him to begin. They want to know what it will be *like*. He shakes his head in despair. It will be like nothing on earth: it will be utterly new – the perfect realization of all that whereunto the whole creation groans and travails. Not like this, not like that; you will not say, 'It is here,' or 'It is there'; you cannot ask who will sit here, who there. These things have no meaning. It is a different *kind* of existence. To be able to conceive it you must be changed. The Kingdom is within you, it will not come by watching: for to conceive it now, or enter it hereafter, you must have passed beyond all thought of greater and less, of reward and punishment.

The disciples were very angry with James and John. Jesus called them to him and said:

'You know that those who have the reputation of ruling the heathen lord it over them, and their great ones have authority over them. Let it not be so among you. But whoever wishes to be great among you, must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be

first among you, must be the slave of all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

To those who would carry impossible and irrelevant logical distinctions into the living centre of Jesus' teaching, and would assert that Jesus was speaking here not of the Kingdom, but of the conduct of his true disciples in this world, let it be said once again that there is no essential distinction between life in this world and life in the Kingdom. The line that is drawn by much modern criticism is arbitrary and false. For the member of the Kingdom, the life of the Kingdom begins here and now, and in every true member of the Kingdom who lives in this world, the Kingdom also exists. That the moment was soon to come when this world would be changed, and a new order of things begin, was assuredly a part, and an essential part, of Jesus' belief: but the new order of outward things was but the necessary consequence of the new order of inward being. That new order of being could be touched here and now. The End of the World was only the completion of its setting. Or, more simply, to know the mystery of the Kingdom involved a profound change in the nature of man's thoughts and acts: he lived from a new centre. He was reintegrated.

To this, the spiritual essence of Jesus' teaching concerning the Kingdom, eschatology is irrelevant. The teaching of Jesus remains ever new and ever true in complete independence of eschatology. But

Jesus' life cannot be divorced from his eschatology, for the eschatology determined his chosen destiny. Eschatology solved the awful problem of Jesus: how he was to bring men, who would not compel the Kingdom to come by their own native act of soul, into the Kingdom. To understand Jesus the man we must understand his eschatology; but even then it is *his* eschatology that we must understand, not the eschatology of the pious Pharisee or the pious peasant of Jesus' day. Nothing is more fatal, more contrary to the spirit of true history or true criticism, than to seek to subdue Jesus to the conceptions of his contemporaries. He used their conceptions to express *his* knowledge. It is to his knowledge, not to their conceptions, that we must go.

Something of Jesus' effort to convey to his disciples the true meaning of his message appears in the two parables which are definitely recorded as belonging to this journey – the parables of the Talents, and of the Labourers in the Vineyard. Luke says of his version of the parable of the Talents, that 'Jesus spoke this parable because he was near Jerusalem, and because they thought that the Kingdom of God would appear immediately'; and Matthew convincingly connects the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard with the disciples' desire to know what their reward would be for having forsaken all their possessions.

'A certain nobleman,' he said, 'went away to a distant country to assume royal power and to return.

And calling his servants he handed over his property to them: to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

'The servant with the five talents immediately went and traded with them and gained another five. Likewise he with the two talents gained another two. But he with one digged a hole and hid his lord's money.

'After a long while his lord returned, having assumed his royal power, and called his servants to account. He with the five talents brought the other five and said: "My lord, you gave me five talents. See, I have gained another five." His lord said to him: "Well done, good and faithful servant, you were faithful in little, I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your lord." He with the two talents came forward and said: "My lord, you gave me two talents. See, I have gained another two." His lord said to him: "Well done, good and faithful servant, you were faithful in little, I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your lord."

'Then he with the one talent came forward and said: "My lord, I knew that you were a hard man, reaping what you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter. I was afraid and went and hid your talent in the earth. See, you have your own." His lord replied: "You wicked and idle servant, you knew that I reap what I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter. You should have given my

money to the bankers and then when I came I should have received my own with interest. Take the talent from him and give it him that has five. For to every one that hath it shall be given, in superfluity. And from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." '

The concluding words, which must have been often on Jesus' lips – 'To him that hath it shall be given . . .' – contain, as we have seen, the inmost essence of Jesus' teaching of the mystery of the Kingdom. And here they are used, not to point the moral of the parable, but as it were to sound a note by which the parable should be understood. For the parable of the Talents is a statement of the mystery of the Kingdom, as modulated by Jesus' destiny as Messiah-to-be. During his absence – long or short the Son knew not, but only the Father – the secret of the Kingdom must be at work incessantly in the souls of his true disciples. By its growth within them they would be judged. He, who now departed to become King indeed, had given them the Word, according to their capacity to receive it. If they had received it truly it must grow within them: the talent would be doubled, the seed become a tree. They would realize the Kingdom in themselves. True, its final manifestation would be by the fiat of the Father and the judgment of his Son; but, to pass that judgment victoriously, they must see to it that the Kingdom grew within them, here and now.

So, in the second parable by which he sought to

lift the scales from the disciples' eyes so that they should see the mystery of the Kingdom, other familiar and repeated words, which also belong to the inmost of the mystery, were used to sound the dominant tone: 'The first shall be last, and the last first.' As before he had striven to drive from their minds the thought that the Kingdom was merely a miraculous creation of God and show that it must be created equally by the souls of men, now he sought to stamp out of their minds the ineradicable notion that membership of the Kingdom was a reward for services done, or sacrifices made. The parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard was spoken in final reply to Peter's unspoken expectation: 'See, we have left everything and followed you.' First, he had ironically promised them in this world a hundredfold of what they had sacrificed – 'with persecutions' – and in the world to come, eternal life. Eternal life, simply, with no distinction of place or person. Now with an extreme of paradox, yet not strained one hairbreadth beyond his true meaning, he strove completely to banish from their minds the idea of justice as a law of the Kingdom.

'The Kingdom of Heaven,' he said, 'is like a master of a house who went out at dawn to hire labourers for his vineyard. And having agreed with them at a shilling a day he sent them into his vineyard. He went out again at the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market-place and said to them: "Go you also into the vineyard and I will

pay you what is just." And they went. And he went again out at the sixth hour, and at the ninth hour, and did the same. Going out at the eleventh hour he found others standing, and said to them: "Why do you stand thus idle all the day?" They say to him: "Because no one has hired us." He said to them: "Go you too into the vineyard."

'When evening came the master of the vineyard said to his foreman: "Call the workers and give them their wages, beginning from the last and going on to the first." When those of the eleventh hour came they received each a shilling. When the first came they thought they would get more. But they too received each a shilling. And, having got their money, they murmured against the master, saying: "Those who came last have worked one hour, yet you make them equal to us who have borne the blazing heat and the burden of the day."

'He spoke to one of them and said: "Friend, I do you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a shilling? Take that which is yours and go your way. It is my will to give to this last the same as I give to you. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with my own? Or is your eye evil, because mine is good?"

'Thus shall the last be first, and the first last.'

It is one of the profoundest of all the parables: its pure transparency opens on to illimitable depths of meaning, and the true import of the frequent phrase: 'The last shall be first, and the first last,' can be grasped only by its means. In the parable there is an

absolute equality of reward: the conception of first and last therefore falls completely away. Yet those of the eleventh hour are paid their equal wage before those of the ninth; and those of the first hour are paid last. To ruffle into a final beauty the surface of this absolute equality of condition in the Kingdom has come the breath and influence of perfect love – that which Jesus so often and so unforgettably expressed, in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and in the words: 'There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine which need not repentance' – that element in Jesus' imagination and knowledge of God which differentiates it for ever from other imagination and knowledge of God. This was completely his own: out of it grew all he did and was.

For in the Kingdom as Jesus knew it, though there is neither first nor last, yet the last are first. It is a paradox and a contradiction: but it is the truth. For it is a Kingdom of love. It could not be otherwise: love imagined, love created it. In the Kingdom of love, those who belong to it find their supreme felicity in yielding to the latest comers. 'There is more joy in heaven,' for heaven itself is but the blessed company of the sons of God.

Such was the teaching of that grim journey to Jerusalem, when Jesus broke the silence wherein he walked alone, ahead of his frightened followers.

2

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

Jesus had determined the nature of his entry into Jerusalem. 'Behold your king cometh meek, and riding upon an ass,' ran the prophecy; and he had determined to fulfil it.

When they were approaching Jerusalem towards the Mount of Olives and had come as far as the village of Bethany, which lay off the road, Jesus said to two of his disciples:

'Go into the village yonder, and just as you enter it you will find an ass's colt tethered, on which no man has ever sat. Untie him and bring him here. And if any one ask you: " Why are you doing this?" say, "The Master needs it, and he will straightway send it back to you again." '

They went away and found a colt tethered outside a door opening on the by-road, and they untied him. Some men standing by said to them: 'What are you doing, untying that colt?' They said what Jesus told them to say, and the men let them go.

It is clear from Mark's subsequent story that Jesus had at least one friend in Bethany – Simon the Leper – at whose house he dined on the night before the Last Supper. Moreover, Bethany was his headquarters during his days in Jerusalem. From Bethany he set out in the morning, to Bethany he

returned in the evening. Probably it was at Simon the Leper's house that he lodged.

Probably, too, it was Simon who had provided for him the unbroken colt. It is not necessary to suppose that Jesus' acquaintance with Bethany was of long standing. Simon may have been one of those in Judæa who heard of Jesus' fame and came to follow him. Jesus must have had many such scattered disciples on whose loyal assistance he could call.

We may suppose that when his decision to come to Jerusalem had been taken, Jesus sent word to Simon in Bethany, telling him the day when he would reach Jerusalem, and bidding him have ready an unbroken colt for his entry. Nothing was more evidently prearranged in Jesus' life than his journey to Jerusalem: the day of his entry was fixed long beforehand, as was the day of his death.

Jesus had determined to enter Jerusalem as the Messiah, but as the Messiah of his own conception. It was no part of his purpose, indeed it was a sheer impossibility, that he should be recognized by others than his own close disciples as Messiah; and his own near disciples could not understand the conception of the Messiah which he had created. It may be doubted whether they even understood the meaning of his chosen entry, for Jesus was fulfilling prophecies that he alone had connected and understood. He had fashioned the Messiah that he was to be from the compulsion of his own consciousness and circumstance: where the prophets helped him he availed

himself of their help; where they could be obeyed, he obeyed them.

In the late afternoon the ass was brought to Jesus. His disciples put their cloaks upon it for a saddle-cloth; and Jesus seated himself. Some spread their cloaks on the road before him; others strewed branches and leaves. Jesus rode in the midst of the company. Before and behind him they cried out 'Hosanna!' as they went along.

What were the actual words of the acclamation we cannot say. Those given by the evangelists have, unfortunately, been reshaped to accord with their belief that Jesus entered Jerusalem openly as the Messiah, which is impossible. Jesus entered Jerusalem to the outward eye as a prophet alone. 'When he entered Jerusalem,' says Matthew, 'the whole city was agog, saying, "Who is this?" And people said: "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee." '

But there was that in the acclamation which offended the eager ears of Pharisees in the crowd. That Jesus should be acclaimed even as a prophet was intolerable to them: their minds had no place for another prophet. The revelation had been, and it was not to be added to. They bade Jesus rebuke his disciples. He replied:

'I tell you if they were silent, the very stones would cry out!' And Luke, who tells us this, tells us also that when Jesus came in sight of the city he wept and cried:

'If only thou knewest this day the secret of peace! But now it is hidden from thine eyes!'

At the first moment of his encounter with Jerusalem, the spiritual tension of Jesus was extreme. His lonely and bitter journey at the head of his uncomprehending followers, his superhuman resolution, his acceptance of his created destiny, had worked a kind of sublime intoxication on his soul. He had lifted himself by the sheer intensity of his insight, his courage, and his love, above the ways of mortal men. Jerusalem had become for him a city of the spirit, a symbol, the bowl for the blood of prophets, the sacrificial altar of God's only son. That it was: that he made it to all time.

But it was a place of earth, earthy. Its mighty temple to the ineffable God, gleaming with silver and gold, built mountain-high on pillared stones over the valleys of Jerusalem, was a second Babylon. Like Babylon it was one of the wonders of the world, like Babylon its seething population uttered the everlasting materiality of creation. Seething, huckstering, chaffering crowds filled its courts, with a babel of chattering voices and the steam of rank humanity. What had those crowds scrambling for profit out of piety to do with the ineffable One? Sons of what Father were they?

Jesus seems for a moment to have recoiled. He looked round the Temple Courts in the evening of his entry, and returned to Bethany: 'because it was already late,' says Mark. But there is that in his

immediately following narrative which tells a different story. There was a moment of recoil. On his grim journey to Jerusalem Jesus, who knew so well the things that are, had forgotten them. He had needed to forget them and to remember only himself and God.

The sight of the seething Temple recalled him with a shock to reality, yet recalled him only halfway. He was poised midway between two worlds, distraught between two certainties, as a ship will shiver in the meeting place of wind and tide.

With an effort of will he asserted his inward certainty against the outward. God and Himself were real: Jerusalem and the Temple a dream. 'Destroy this Temple,' he said, as he looked round its crowded courts, 'and I will raise it again in three days.' The curious crowd that had followed the Galilean prophet from the gates of the City marked his words.

What did he mean? Nothing at that moment of sudden tension, but what he said. He was possessed by a sense of omnipotence. Now or never God must be with him, filling him with power. But what he meant was nothing but the extreme assertion of the truth to which we who so passionately scrutinize his history are the unconscious witnesses – that the spirit is mightier than the world of things. At that moment, we doubt not, Jesus meant that a more glorious Temple would arise at his creative word. Whether with great stones and roofs of gold, or simply in the consummation of that unity of man

and God which he knew – who can say? Could Jesus himself at that moment have said?

He had but uttered his exultant sense that the things of earth and the great city of Jerusalem were as a dream compared with God's power that worked in him and had borne him to this encounter. He had reasserted his inward certainty against the outward fact: it had triumphed, at a price. The effort of the tense will was to betray itself.

He returned to Bethany and passed a night of wakeful and tremendous expectation: the very thought of food was forgotten. As he journeyed in the morning back to Jerusalem a sudden hunger possessed him. In the distance he saw a fig-tree in leaf. He went to it: it had no fruit. Among the forgotten things of earth he had forgotten that he was not now in gentler Galilee, where figs were early. Near Jerusalem, 'it was not the season of figs.' And he turned on the fig-tree:

'May no one ever eat fruit from thee for ever!'

The disciples heard him. Peter surely did, and told the queer and vivid story to Mark years after. It tells us something precious for the understanding of Jesus' state of soul as he went to the doing of the most outwardly striking act of his life – the Cleansing of the Temple. For that was – to use the word precisely – the most *deliberate* act of his life. Here for a moment he seems not to be obeying some inward and inevitable compulsion, but as it were imposing an act upon himself by force of will. This thing

stands out from among the certain actions of his life as one that he might not have done. It is not inevitably his own: neither is the cursing of the fig-tree. They belong together, and belong together to one particular moment of his history – the final clash of spiritual certainty and material fact.

In his lonely concentration on the things that are not yet, he had forgotten the things that are – and the sudden awareness of them created in his tense soul a strange exasperation. He was omnipotent, and he was not; things were, and they were not. For a moment by an act of will he would make them other than they were. He came to the Temple and imperiously drove out before him the buyers and sellers from the Court of the Gentiles; he overturned the money-changers' tables and the stools of the dove-sellers; he stopped and turned back the carriers who made the Temple Courts their thoroughfare; and he cried:

'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the Gentiles"? And you have made it a den of thieves.'

For an instant he had succeeded. He had flung himself along against the vast materiality of the Temple, and it had yielded. The eager crowd behind him, avid to see the doings of the Galilean prophet, his own faithful and enthusiast company from Galilee, had frightened the market-keepers for a day: but only for a day.

But it was not that which awakened him. Rather

a sense of his own exasperation; a knowledge that his own anger, being anger, was wrong. He had been caught unawares where wind and tide meet, and the tiller had trembled in his hands. Such, it seems, is the thought behind in the visibly authentic words he spoke on the next day as they came out again from Bethany.

Peter saw that the fig-tree was withered. I do not pretend to know how it happened: a cold wind, a frost, anything. It was a poor fig-tree and a solitary one. But it *was* withered. Jesus had forgotten all about it: it was the last thing he would have remembered at that moment. Peter reminded him.

'Look, Master, the fig-tree you cursed is withered!'

Peter was surprised. The disciples, like the modern historian and probably for the same reason, could not get used to miracles.

Perhaps Jesus also was surprised; but he was not in a mood to be surprised at anything. His words belong to a different order of thought.

'Have faith in God,' he said. 'Verily, I say to you that whoever shall say to this mountain: "Be lifted up and cast into the sea," and shall not doubt in his heart, but believe that what he says shall be, it shall be done for him. Therefore, I say to you – all that you pray for and ask for, believe that you have already received it, and it shall be done unto you. And when you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone – forgive him, that your Father in heaven may forgive you your failings.'

Why should Jesus speak now of forgiveness as the essential to prayer? Surely because the memory of his own exasperation pressed hard upon him. When he had most greatly needed to be one with God, the perfect instrument of God's purpose, he had been warped by anger. Anger for God, no doubt: but if God could not be angry, how could his son be? By anger God's son ceased to be his son.

'Love your enemies, and pray for them that do you harm. That thus ye may become sons of your father: for he makes his sun to rise upon good men and bad, and his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust.'

This was the secret. And prayer consisted in man's knowledge of his union with God, of the son's identity with his Father. Such prayer, which alone Jesus taught, is not a petition, but a condition, a condition of which anger was the negation – a vision of all things with the serene eye of the Creator-God. To such prayer all things were possible, for the son was one with God: yet by such prayer nothing could be demanded, for it was a complete and open-eyed submission to God's will. In such a condition, to believe that you have received a thing is indeed to have it, for you can believe that you have received only that which it is God's will that you should receive.

So Jesus' anger ebbed away. Henceforward he appears as perfectly calm.

3

THE DISPUTES IN THE TEMPLE

The cleansing of the Temple was a bold act: but, though Jesus had done it as his Father's son, it was not more than the people expected of a prophet. And to prove that the people were on his side we need not the express word of Mark that all the common people were astonished and thrilled at his teaching: without the open enthusiasm of the people he could not have accomplished his cleansing of the Temple. Those vested interests would not have retired at the command of a prophet, even though the prophet were Jesus of Nazareth. They gave way to a man on whose words the people hung.

The chief-priests and the Pharisees, the members of the great Sanhedrin, were quickly aware of this threat to their authority and to the priestly revenues. On the next day when Jesus was walking and teaching in the precincts, some of them came to him and asked: 'By what authority do you do these things? Who gave you the authority to do them?'

Jesus, surrounded by his eager listeners, replied:

'I will ask you a single question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John – was it from heaven or from men? Answer me!'

At first it seems a masterly evasion. But indeed Jesus' question went straight to the heart of the

matter. John's baptism had been crucial in his life: with his baptism had come that knowledge of God and his own relation to God, by which all his subsequent acts had been determined. From his baptism a straight road led to the place where he now stood, in the central shrine of Judaism, doing battle with the champions of the Law in their own citadel. John's baptism may mean little enough to us to-day: as we see it, it was only the outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace which Jesus would have conquered without it. But it meant, and it must have meant, much to Jesus: to him the inward event and the outward occasion were inseparably one. And the early Christians did well and truly in making baptism the primary sacrament of the Christian Church, though Jesus himself baptized no one. By baptism, as by no other sacrament, a man is fitly dedicated to the following of the man Jesus.

On John's baptism, as the outward sign of the inward elevation, Jesus felt that his authority did truly rest. Was it divine or human, from God or from men? For John's baptism of Jews was new in the history of Judaism. It was the creation of the prophet who had believed in the imminence of the Wrath to Come – a mark set upon those who verily repented of their sins and thus escaped the justice of God. Jesus knew well that neither the priestly aristocracy of the Sadducees nor the Pharisees, the fervid worshippers of the Law, could admit the divine appointment of John or his sacrament. For both of them,

the means of purification was sacrifice and the place of purification the Temple where they stood. But there were the people, crowded about Jesus, listening to his teaching: they believed that John was veritably a prophet ordained by God and Jesus his true successor.

Jesus' claim, implicit in his question, was simply this: that he was indeed a prophet, upon whom the mantle of John had fallen at his baptism. And this was the only claim to an outward and visible authority that he could make. The rest, the very substance, of his authority was inwardly derived – it shone in what he said and did and was. Had he tried to prove it to men blind, by conviction and interest, to these things, what words could he have used save that he was sent by God? Directly to claim God for the source of his authority before Sadducees and Pharisees would have been madness. He claimed no more than to have been consecrated to his mission by the baptism of John.

'Was it from heaven or from men?' They could not say 'Yes'; they dared not say 'No.' They replied that they could not say: they did not know.

Jesus answered: 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.'

At no moment in his career does the swift and subtle, yet strangely simple, *genius* of Jesus appear so evidently as in his conflicts with his great and learned adversaries. The gesture of his mind, become the perfect instrument of his spirit, has the beauty of

finality. His words are become so familiar to us from childhood that it is hard for our adult intelligence to stand away from them and see that they might have been other than they were. They have acquired, through the ages, the simplicity of predestination.

Yet, if we can surprise ourselves into unfamiliarity, and hear them as though they were uttered for the first time to-day, one quality shines out from them above all others. These are not the words of a visionary or a dreamer; they are the words of a man who lived completely in this world of men – and lived in it the more completely because his spirit breathed another air. The fundamental detachment he had conquered gave him a more certain command of the mundane reality, as though he saw it distinctly and fully from a mountain-top. He reckons his adversary and his situation in an instant, lets fly his arrow, soft and swift as a smile; and the victory is his. This carpenter of Galilee was the Man of men.

The members of the great Sanhedrin 'were afraid of him.' They might well be: he was invulnerable. 'They sought how they might destroy him.' There was nothing else that they could do: they could only vanquish his body. His spirit had vanquished theirs, and vanquished it for ever. For these replies of his could never be forgotten: they had in them a mastery which was indelible from the memory of even the simplest mind. Against such a man the great ones could compass but one thing – his bodily

death: thereby they were to set the seal upon his victory. Yet even that was not easy for them to compass. He had done no wrong, spoken no blasphemy. He knew his adversaries and their powers: what they could do and what they could not do. He made no claim that they could seize upon. Until he chose, they were impotent against him: he was the master of his destiny.

He turned to the members of the Sanhedrin, and said:

'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went to the first and said: "My son, go and work in the vineyard to-day." He answered: "I will go, sir," and did not go. The man went to his second son and said the same. He answered: "I will not," but afterwards he repented and went. Which of the two did his father's will?'

They answered: 'The second.'

Jesus said:

'Verily I tell you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will go before you into the Kingdom of God. For John came to you to declare the road to righteousness, and you would not believe him. But the tax-gatherers and the harlots believed him. But you, when you saw that, did not repent afterwards and believe him.'

So Jesus drove home the significance of John the Baptist. For himself, as the last and greatest figure in the succession of Jewish prophets, it was tremendous. Not merely had the divine inheritance passed

more fully to him through John's baptism; but his own destiny as Messiah depended upon the recognition of John as a prophet and more than a prophet – as Elijah 'which was for to come.' In the mind of Jesus himself, who had recognized him, first as a prophet when he sought his baptism, and then, as his own solitary and sublime destiny began to take shape in his soul, as more than a prophet, John's position legitimized his own. As he had grown since John baptized him, so John had also grown, until at last, at the moment he himself became Messiah, John became Elijah. An imprisoned and beheaded Elijah, for a suffering and crucified Messiah – it was well.

But this thought was for himself and his nearer disciples alone. He was content to vindicate John as a prophet as he stood now before the people and the members of the Sanhedrin. For the rest he would speak in parables. Out of his question concerning the sons in the vineyard sprang to his need the vision of a greater vineyard. He said:

'A man planted a vineyard, and set a ditch round it, and digged a wine-press and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went to live abroad. At the appointed time he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that he might receive his due of the fruits of the vineyard. They took the servant and thrashed him and sent him away empty. Again he sent another servant to them. Him they beat on the head and dishonoured. He sent another. Him they

killed: and many others – some they beat, and some they killed. He had but one remaining – a son whom he loved. At the last he sent him to them, saying: "They will have regard to my son." But those husbandmen said to themselves: "This is the heir. Come let us kill him," and they threw his body out of the vineyard.

'What will the lord of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy those husbandmen and give the vineyard to others.'

After a pause he said:

'Have you never read this in the Scriptures?

'"*The stone which the builders rejected is become the headstone of the corner:*

This is the Lord's doing: and it is a wonder in our eyes."

Therefore I say to you: The Kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to the heathen who bears the fruits of the Kingdom.'

And he added mysteriously:

'Whoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken in pieces; and on whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder.'

Mysteriously: because his words had no immediate connection with the previous thought, or with the meaning he had given his quotation from the 118th Psalm. The rejected stone had been not himself, but the heathen who should inherit the Kingdom. But the words have the ring of authenti-

city. And for Jesus now the rejection of the Kingdom and of himself who would have led the way thither were indeed the same: he *was* the Kingdom, now that he was Messiah-to-be. He who had been the son seeking brothers to enter the Kingdom with him, having found none, had become the great Judge who should establish it with power. Those mysterious words were the murmur of his secret knowledge.

Then the members of the great Sanhedrin went away. Their plan had been to expose and discredit Jesus before the people who heard him gladly; it had failed, and they instead had been discomfited. When they had gone, Jesus spoke another parable:

'A man prepared a great banquet, and invited many. When the time of the banquet was come he sent his servant to say to the invited guests: "Come now, for all is ready." And they all began with one accord to excuse themselves. The first said to the servan : "I have bought some land, and I must go out and inspect it. Pray let me be excused." Another said: "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them. Pray let me be excused." Another said: "I have married a wife: therefore I cannot come." And the servant came to the lord and told him this. Then the master of the house was angry, and said to his servant: "Go out quickly into the squares and alleys of the city, and bring in hither the poor, the beggars, the blind and the lame."

'And the servant said: "What you commanded is done, my lord, and there is still room."

'And the lord said to the servant: "Go into the roads and hedges and compel them to come in, that my house may be full to overflowing. For I tell you that none of those men who were invited shall taste of my feast." '

That is Luke's version of the parable; he more closely represents the original than does Matthew, whose version is a mixture of two, or even three, different parables. Jesus was concerned at this moment with the rejection of his message and of the Kingdom by the leaders of Jewry: the common people and the heathen would be the chosen guests of the Lord. He could speak with knowledge, for he as Messiah would choose them.

But the members of the Sanhedrin had not given up their hope of entangling him in argument. On another day they tried to force out of him a declaration of hostility to the Roman power. They had failed to elicit from him a blasphemy on which they themselves might condemn him, with popular approval; now they sought to make him declare himself a revolutionary and bring him under a Roman condemnation. They said to him:

'Master, we know that you are true, and have no respect of persons. For you do not regard men's outward: but you teach the way of God in truth. Is it right to pay tribute to Cæsar or not? Shall we give or not give?'

He answered:

'Why do you tempt me? Bring me a shilling that I may see it.'

They brought it.

He said:

'Whose is this image and this inscription?'

They said:

'Cæsar's.'

He said:

'Give to Cæsar what is Cæsar's, and to God what is God's.'

Then they brought before him a woman taken in the act of adultery, and they said to him:

'Master, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commands us to stone such creatures. But what say you?'

Jesus bent down and began to write with his finger on the ground. But they stood there and asked again. Then he raised himself up and said to them:

'Let the sinless one among you cast the first stone at her.'

He bent down again and wrote on the ground.

Then they went away, one by one, beginning with the older men, till Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Then Jesus lifted himself up, and seeing the woman alone, said to her:

'Woman, where are your accusers? Did none of them condemn you?'

'No one, sir.'

'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and sin no more.'

The story does not belong to the original text of the Fourth Gospel. It is a fragment of the primitive tradition, which surely bears its authenticity written upon it.

Then came some of the priestly aristocracy, the Sadducees, men of a different stamp from the Pharisees, the least Jewish of the Jews, with more than a tinge of the religious indifference of the cultivated Hellene, though they held the priestly offices in Jerusalem: enemies of Jesus, no less than the Pharisees, but rather as men whose prestige and revenues were threatened by his actions, than as men who like the Pharisees held strongly and sternly to another God than his. It is not easy to distinguish their true lineaments at this distance of time: but perhaps we may describe them as the realists among the Jews: their tradition was that of a ruling caste, and they held aloof from the developments of the later Pharisaic religion. True traditionalists, they disregarded that later 'tradition' which the Pharisee had created, and which Jesus denounced: they denied the vague beliefs in the resurrection of the body and the existence of angels and dæmons to which the Pharisees, representative in this of the common piety of the race, had come. The Sadducees rejected such beliefs, finding for them no authority in the Pentateuch, by which alone they held; they were remote indeed from the transcendent Messianic

expectation in which the fervid aspiration of the Jewish people now found its comfort. Their home was in Jerusalem; they had little contact with the people at large; and Jesus himself, as the gospel narratives show, had little contact with them. Jewish piety was represented by the Pharisees alone: his constant conflict with them was inevitable. But the Sadducees were as foreign to him as a Cardinal of Rome might be to a village prophet. Except that Jesus was, and was not, a village prophet.

Some Sadducees came and said to him:

'Master, Moses commanded us that if a man's brother die and leave a wife but no child, the man should take his brother's wife and raise up seed to his brother. Now there were seven brothers. The first took a wife and died and left no seed. And the second took her and died, leaving no seed. Likewise the third. And the seven of them left no seed. Last of all the woman herself died. In the resurrection, when they rise from the dead, whose wife shall she be? For she was wife to the seven of them.'

Jesus answered:

'Are you not astray, because you do not know either the scriptures or the power of God? For when men rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are married, but are as the angels in heaven.

'But as for the dead, that they rise from the dead, have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the place concerning the Bush, how God spoke to him, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of

Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? God is not the God of dead men, but of living ones: you are far astray.'

The reply may seem remote from us now: but it is precious. It gives something of the quality of Jesus' belief in the life to come. The resurrection for him was not the resurrection of the body, as indeed it cannot be for any true religious thinker. The resurrection was for him an ineffable condition in which all bodily limitation was transcended; it was a condition of being perpetually in the presence of God. Strange, yet inevitable, that on the death of this man should have been built the dogma of the bodily resurrection.

And how bold, how creative, was his interpretation of the words of Exodus! It sprang, not from the text of scripture, but from a knowledge of God. 'God is not the God of dead men, but of living ones.' That was not a deduction, but an immediate certitude; as was also his belief in a resurrection. They were derived immediately from his knowledge of God. In his communion with God he touched the condition 'when there shall be no more time': life and death, past, present and future, were but manifestations of the one Eternal whom he knew as Father. There was no arguing with the Sadducees: they did not know 'the power of God.' They built their foolish dialectic on the assumption that the conditions of the world in time obtained in the timeless world of God. 'You are far astray,' he said simply.

One of the scribes – a learned Pharisee – heard the debate, and was impressed by Jesus' part in it. He came forward and asked him:

'Which is the first commandment of all?'

Jesus said:

'The first commandment is: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and all thy mind and all thy strength." The second is this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There is no other commandment greater than these.'

The Scribe said:

'Master, you have said truly that He is One and there is none other save Himself. And "to love Him with all thy heart and all thy understanding and all thy strength," and "to love one's neighbour as oneself," is more than all holocausts and sacrifices.'

Jesus said:

'You are not far from the Kingdom of God.'

Then, says Mark, no one dared to question him any more. Instead Jesus himself asked a question. But the men of the Sanhedrin were gone. He said to the people:

'How can the Scribes say that the Messiah is David's son? For David himself, speaking in the Holy Spirit, said:

"'*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand till I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet.*"

'David himself calls him "Lord." Then how can he be his son?'

The words are precious: first, because in them Jesus by his own manifestly authentic saying shatters the legend of his birth in Bethlehem, from the line of David. He was not of David's house; nor was he born in Bethlehem. Again they are precious because they reveal the working of his mind as he fitted Scripture to his own secret knowledge of himself as Messiah. He too had probably once believed that the Messiah must be the son of David: now he knew that he was the Messiah, and not the son of David, but the son of God. He put it to them as an abstract question, calmly. The throbbing reference to himself none but his chosen knew. Again, they are precious because through them we gain a glimpse of his expectation of his own destiny. In the words of the 118th Psalm, from which he had quoted concerning the headstone of the corner, 'he would not die, but live': and he would be uplifted to sit on the right hand of God until the world was made ready for his coming in power to establish the Kingdom of God – to shatter the world in time in order that God's timeless world might be.

And finally they are precious because they tell us of the triumph song that was ringing in Jesus' soul.

This is part of the 110th Psalm:

'*The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool.*

Yea, the Lord shall send thee from Zion the sceptre of thy rule; he shall make thee reign in the midst of thine enemies; thou shalt be arrayed in the holy vestments.

On the day thou comest to power, thou art supreme, living and fresh like the dew of the morning.

The Lord hath sworn, and will not change: Thou shalt be a priest for ever, like Melchizedek of old.'

And this is part of the 118th Psalm:

'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

The Lord hath chastened me grievously; but he hath not left me to die.

Open to me the gate of victory: I will go into them to praise the Lord.

This is the gate of the Lord: which only the righteous shall enter.

I give thanks unto thee, for thou didst answer me, and didst save me.

The stone which the builders rejected is become the headstone of the corner.

This is the Lord's doing: and it is a wonder in our eyes.'

The glorious music of these songs of victory out of defeat echoed in Jesus' soul as he stood in the midst of his enemies. They had been sung of him, sung for him, centuries ago.

4

THE FINAL MESSAGE

One day as they were leaving the Temple, one of his disciples said to him:

'Master! Look, what great stones! What huge buildings!'

Jesus answered:

'You see these huge buildings? There shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.'

It has often been supposed that this was a prophecy of the destruction of the Temple in the great siege a generation later. Therefore it has been welcomed by those who love prophecies, and rejected as a posthumous invention by those who disbelieve in them.

But the specific reference is mistaken. Jesus was not foreseeing, nor was he concerned to foresee, the destruction of Jerusalem by the legionaries of Titus. He was describing the Last Things – that final moment of chaos which should accompany his own advent as Messiah. He was to go to the very verge of death; he was to be taken up and set upon the right hand of God; there he would remain till the moment came for his advent upon earth, to judge both the quick and the dead, and establish the Kingdom of God. At that moment the whole earth would be involved in chaos and tribulation: of which

the overthrow of the great Temple was but a single part – the mightiest, because the most symbolic and significant. For the great Temple was to Jesus veritably the House of God on earth.

The faith may be strange to us: that Jesus held it there is little doubt. There is equally little doubt that at all times in that period of his life which is known to us he believed in the imminence of the Last Things and the End of the World. John the Baptist had proclaimed it: Jesus had gone out to be baptized by him into that change of soul (for that is the nearest equivalent of the word we translate by 'repentance') which should secure the changed man from the Wrath of God. Only when John had been prevented by imprisonment from continuing to proclaim his message had Jesus' own ministry begun. It was, historically, a continuation of John's mission. The End of the World was always at hand; nor was the Wrath of God ever far away.

And this is too easily forgotten; it is indeed inevitable that it should be forgotten. The Jesus who is vivid to us is the Jesus of all time – the Man of Love – and we forget the Jesus of his own time. The Jesus who was utterly different from the men of his day is the Jesus who has perennial significance. The expectation of the End of the World is become remote and strange; the process of history has annihilated it from our consciousness. We can scarcely make real to ourselves the certain fact that for Jesus there was no such thing as the process of

history. The world in time was for him ever on the brink of the plunge into timelessness.

And at first when we force ourselves, as we must, to make this dominant belief of Jesus' consciousness real to our imagination; when in order to come near to him, we try, as we must, to live ourselves for an hour or a day into his expectation of an absolute and universal change, we find a baffling paradox in the man's love and delight of the life that is. It is hard to hold them together in a single act of comprehension; yet they must be held together. To lose hold of the one or the other is to be condemned to misunderstanding.

Perhaps we may best approach the paradox in this way. All that is unique in Jesus derives directly from his own power of love; from this came his knowledge of God as a loving Father, his knowledge of himself as God's son, his knowledge that the coming Kingdom of God consisted in a fraternity of sons, his knowledge that the way to enter it for any man was to know himself, and to live, as the son of God, and his knowledge that this was possible for every man. A superb equality and a divine privilege were thus the birthright of mankind. In other words, Jesus knew the nature of the Kingdom – this was the 'mystery of the Kingdom of God' which he proclaimed.

But it was to come suddenly; it was to come according to the Messianic expectation of his day. The Love of God had not abolished the Wrath of

God. It was simply that those who were turned and were changed would enjoy the love of God. The emphasis had shifted: men could become God's sons and enter into his Kingdom of Love; but if they refused – the judgment and the wrath of God still awaited them. The Messiah would come, and come quickly, to judge the world, and to condemn those who had not hearkened to the wonderful news of Jesus and become God's sons.

The crucial change in the soul of Jesus, which came to pass between his baptism by John and his journey to Jerusalem, was his realization that he was to be that Messiah. From the knowledge that he was God's son, he passed inevitably to the knowledge that he was God's only son; from that knowledge he was bound to pass to the conviction that he was the Son of Man in the sense of the Book of Daniel, the anointed Messiah, the Christ, God's great Deputy and Judge. While he, like his followers, expected another as Messiah, he could live in this human life; but the moment he knew that he himself was to be Messiah, then he must be changed. He had to become a truly superhuman being, which he knew he was not: only death could work that change.

So the chain of predestination is complete. Jesus' love created him first God's son, then God's only son, then Messiah-to-be. The creation necessarily accomplished itself within the forms of the belief which he shared with his nation. What he was was

greater, far greater than the forms of his belief; but without the forms of his belief he could never have become what he did become.

His mind was filled to overflowing with the thought of his destiny. That was not to be spoken of publicly in the Temple. The secret was known to his chosen alone, and to them it was a mystery, as it must needs have been. How could the living man they loved, who stood before them and spoke to them, be, how could he become, the transcendental and ineffable figure of Messiah? Jesus himself could not have told them. He would die, and yet he would not die. Even he could know no more.

He sat on the Mount of Olives looking out over the great city. His disciples were with him. He thought of his strange destiny, and said:

'Jerusalem, Jerusalem! that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent to her, how often have I longed to gather thy children together, as a bird gathers her chicks under her wings; but ye would not. Behold your house is left desolate. For I say to you: you shall not see me henceforward until you shall say:

' "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" '

Not till he returned from God's right hand in the unearthly glory of Messiah should Jerusalem see him again.

His teaching in the Temple was over; the time of his sacrifice was at hand. On the Mount of

Olives, looking down upon the city which had refused him, he spoke to the disciples of the time between his departure and his coming again.

His veritable words must be sought rather in his parables of the Coming than in the long chapter concerning signs of the End in the Gospel of Mark, where fragments of Jesus' authentic speech have become inextricably entangled with the expression of the hopes and fears of the early Church.

In the parables the stress falls almost wholly upon the suddenness of his coming. He will come like a thief in the night, like a master home from abroad, like a bridegroom returned from a marriage feast. From the parables it seems clear that in Jesus' own expectation there would be no *sign* of the coming, and that the long list of signs in the eschatological chapter of Mark is, for that reason alone, apocryphal. Jesus was no lover of signs, save those alone which were eternally present – the signs of the times. And we may be fairly sure that the parable of the fig-tree:

'When its branches are soft and put out leaves, you know that summer is near. So you, when you see these things happen, know that He is near, at your door,'

had no real reference to the context of visible catastrophe into which it has been inserted. The signs of his coming could only be spiritually discerned.

He had spoken of the advent of the Messiah openly

in the Temple, though with no hint of the secret that the Messiah would be himself. And to the Pharisees and Scribes also he had spoken only of signs which are no signs:

'When you see a cloud rise in the west, you say, "There is a shower coming," and so it is.

'When you feel the south wind blow, you say, "It will be hot," and so it is.

'Hypocrites, you know how to decipher the look of earth and sky, how is it you cannot decipher the meaning of this age?'

The coming would be sudden, and there would be no sign. The great catastrophe, the passing away of heaven and earth, the downfall of the Temple – these were not signs of the end, but the end itself. When his disciples asked him privately when these things should be, Jesus told them frankly that he did not know.

'The day and the hour of these things no one knows – not the angels in heaven, nor the Son – but only the Father.'

That sentence is visibly authentic: neither the early nor the later Church invented such a stumbling-block to Christology. And it is congruous with all we know of Jesus that he should have freely acknowledged his ignorance. He knew only that he would come with power and glory to be the judge of men. Earth and heaven alike would be no more. The timeless and transcendental order would have begun.

The parables of the Coming have but one purport, the disciples must be ready for the day. They must be prepared for the suddenness of the Advent, and for the Judgment. In the parable of the Ten Virgins it is the suddenness that is insisted on.

'Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps, but took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their bottles as well as their lamps. But the bridegroom was late in coming, and they all grew sleepy and slept. At midnight there was a shout: "The bridegroom is coming! Come forth to meet him!" Then all those virgins awoke and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise: "Give us some of your oil: for our lamps are going out." But the wise answered: "No, or there will not be enough for both of us. Go to the market and buy oil for yourselves."

'And while they were gone away to buy, the bridegroom came, and the virgins who were ready entered with him, and the door was shut. Afterwards the other virgins came and cried: "Lord, Lord! Open to us and let us in." But he answered:

' "Verily, I say to you: I do not know you."

'Watch therefore, for you know not the day or the hour.'

There are traces of other versions of this parable in

Luke, but the variations are of no consequence: perhaps it was told, certainly it was remembered, in more forms than one.

Jesus spoke of himself not only as a bridegroom suddenly coming to bid the marriage feast begin, but as the Master of a house who goes abroad leaving the charge of his house and the care of his possessions to his servants.

'As when a man goes away and leaves his house and gives his servants authority, to each one his work, and bids the doorkeeper watch. Watch therefore. For you do not know when the Master of the house is coming – late, or at midnight, or at daybreak, or in the morning. Lest he come suddenly and find you asleep.

'Blessed are those servants whom the Master finds awake when he comes. Verily, I tell you, he will put on an apron, and make them recline at table and come forward himself to wait on them. Whether he comes in the second or third watch of the night and finds them thus alert, blessed are they.'

But the servant's duty is not merely to watch for the return of his Master, but faithfully to administer his Master's possessions while he is away.

'Where is the trusty and thoughtful steward whom the master will set over his establishment to give out supplies at due time? Blessed is that servant if his master finds him so doing when he arrives.

I tell you plainly he will set him over all his property.'

Possibly this version of Luke's is a mixture of the previous parable and the Parable of the Talents: but the confusion, if confusion it is, is unimportant; and Luke has probably preserved an authentic saying of Jesus.

'The servant who knew his lord and master's orders and did not prepare for them, will receive many lashes:

'Whereas he who was ignorant and did what deserves beating will receive few lashes.

'He who has much given him will have much required of him: and he who has much entrusted to him will have all the more demanded of him.'

There were evidently three main parables of the Coming: one of the sudden coming of the Bridegroom, another, of the sudden return of the Master to his house left in charge of his servants, and a third, of the nature of his judgment upon his servants for what they had done with his property in his absence. In the Gospels these fade into one another. Only the first and third have a quite definite form in the Parables of the Ten Virgins and the Talents.

Luke states that the Parable of the Talents was spoken 'as he was nearing Jerusalem, and as his disciples imagined that the Kingdom of God would immediately appear.' And to that place it has been given. But obviously it would be fantastic to try to

establish any precise chronological order in Jesus' teaching after the recognition at Cæsarea. Nobody knows how long Jesus' journey to Jerusalem lasted; nobody knows who is right – Luke, in putting the Parable of the Talents as spoken on the way to Jerusalem with a particular purpose which it suits scarcely so well as some of his earlier parables, or Matthew, in placing it as spoken in Jerusalem. Yet Luke is certainly right in placing the Parable of the Talents some time before the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. Between the utterance of those two parables, Jesus' conception of the judgment he would pass, as Messiah, upon the world had changed. When he spoke the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats he had ceased to think in terms of his disciples, or of his servants, or of a nascent community he was leaving behind. Yet such are the thoughts behind his parables of the Coming. He leaves behind a band of followers: he is not certain of them, but on the whole he trusts them. They do not understand his teaching, yet they will be loyal to that in it which they do understand. They will suffer grievously for their loyalty, but perhaps they have learned enough of the nature of God the Father to endure steadfastly until the coming of the unknown Day when Jesus will return as his Deputy and Judge.

So Jesus sought to animate his disciples with a courage not unworthy of his own, that they might endure through the interspace of tribulation before the unknown day of his coming as Messiah. He

would come, he believed, in a little while: his disciples would not have long to wait. They must be faithful to his teaching, loyal servants of the Master of the house whom the enemy had called Beelzebub. The persecution that had been his portion would be theirs also. The bitterness of realization is in his words:

'You think I came here to bring peace. No, I tell you – dissension.

'After this there will be five at issue in one house, three divided against two, and two against three – father against son, and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.'

Jesus had once believed that he had come to bring, not only peace, but gladness – the wonderful news. He had learned the lesson that every great man after him who has sought to bring new birth to the souls of men has learned: that nothing more surely provokes the hatred of the world than the knowledge that he is steering by a star it cannot see.

'Do not think I came to bring peace to the earth; I came not to bring peace, but a sword.

'I have come to set fire to the earth – and if only it were kindled already, what more do I desire?

'I have a baptism to undergo. How can I endure till it be accomplished!'

The terrible tension of Jesus' spirit during the last

days in Jerusalem is in those words. He spoke, as he had spoken to the sons of Zebedee, of the baptism he was awaiting. It was not a vague metaphor. What he had imagined was indeed a second baptism: as he had been born again in Jordan into the knowledge that he was God's son, so now he was to be reborn yet again into Messiah. But the days of waiting were terrible. The supreme effort of will, by which he not only compelled himself to his destiny, but daily faced, with perfect outward calm, his enemies in the Temple, with perfect clarity of vision turning aside their attempts to entangle him on other issues than the one he had chosen, made supreme demands upon him. When he had escaped from the public eye and was alone with his disciples, his words betrayed the throbbing fever of his strained impatience for the end.

Long he must have talked with his disciples, seeking to nerve them to the ordeal, in vain. Long before his capture in the Garden he was convinced that they would abandon him. It did not matter. As his destiny had been conceived, so it must be endured, alone. Only those would stand by him who understood him, and there were none. And so his mind passed away from the thought of a faithful band who would continue to proclaim the good news, work with their talents, spread the Kingdom, while he was gone. It was no use asking for such things from men, even from men who loved him. How could they teach, how could they suffer for, how

could they enter, a Kingdom of God they did not understand? He had made the gate too narrow: he must fling it wide as the wide world itself. He said:

'When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he shall sit on his throne of glory. And all the nations shall be gathered before him: and he shall divide them as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats; and he shall put the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left.

'Then the King shall say to those on his right hand: "Come, you blessed of my Father, and inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you nursed me; I was in prison and you visited me."

'Then shall the just answer and say:

' "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you? When did we see you a stranger and take you in? Or naked and clothed you? Or in prison and visited you?"

'Then the King shall answer and say:

' "Verily, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of these the least of my brothers, you did it to me."

'Then he shall say to those on his left:

' "Away from me into the everlasting fire that is prepared for the Devil and his angels.

' "For I was hungry and you gave me no food; I

was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you took me not in; naked and you clothed me not; sick and in prison and you nursed me not."

'Then they also shall answer and say:

' "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or naked or in prison and did not minister to you?"

'Then he shall answer and say:

' "Verily, I say to you: inasmuch as you did it not to one of these least, you did it not to me."

'And they shall depart into eternal punishment; but the just to eternal life.'

Such was the last of Jesus' parables; fitly the last: for it is the greatest of all. Into its lovely simplicity he gathered all his knowledge: what he had been, what he had become, and what he was to be. He had been the great lover of mankind, he had become the Son of God, he was to be the Messiah and Judge. And all these things, in this last parable, are blent into one. He is the great Judge; but he judges men by the love they have shown, not to himself, not to his chosen, but to any man. For all men were his brothers. By their love, and by their love alone, would this Judge judge mankind. One forgotten act of love should save a man's soul alive; one cup of cold water given in love to a beggar on the highway should bring a man into the Kingdom and make him the brother of God's only son.

In that sublime parable all the paradox of Jesus' destiny is dissolved away. In it he was true to all

that he had been and had become; in those words we hear the voice of the Man of men on the brink of his sacrifice – true words. For, whatever we may believe, whatever we may know, if our souls are alive at all, we are judged by Jesus of Nazareth. One act of love, and we live; and the loveless ones are damned everlastingly. The gentlest, the sternest, the most inexorable judgment ever to be passed on man: for it is endorsed by the secret soul of man.

5

MARY OF MAGDALA

CERTAINLY three, and perhaps four, Marys played a part in the life of Jesus – Mary his mother, Mary called Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses: 'John' tells also of a Mary, wife of Cleophas. Of these the most significant in the life of Jesus the teacher and Messiah was Mary Magdalene, Mary from Magdala, a city on the western shore of the Lake of Galilee.

Concerning Mary, the mother of Jesus, the synoptists are adamantine. Their witness that she was opposed to his ministry during his lifetime cannot be shaken. Charity and probability alike lead us to suppose that her opposition was the opposition of a mother filled with loving fears for the dangerous courses of her son; and that the Pharisees, by working on her fears and her piety, induced her to the vain attempt to take Jesus back to his home in Nazareth. Probably they told her of his blasphemies in Capernaum; and she, poor woman, was only too eager to believe that her son was merely mad. 'He was always a queer boy' – one can hear her saying apologetically to the great men of religion – 'Do not do anything yet. Let me try to get him home.'

The conduct of Jesus' mother during his lifetime can be perfectly explained as the natural behaviour of a simple, loving and pious peasant-woman; and

Jesus' sternness towards her as the sternness of a loving son, compelled to choose between his affection and his destiny. The pathetic tragedy of Jesus and his mother has been re-enacted in little many times in human history between a pious mother and a son with a mission. But the fact remains that the mother of Jesus had no part in the life of his which concerns the world, and no part even in his death. From the beginning of his mission to the end of it Jesus had neither brothers nor mother. She was not standing by the Cross; perhaps she was weeping in Nazareth.

But the other two Marys were among Jesus' most ardent followers. They belonged to a group of faithful women who followed him in Galilee and went with him from Galilee up to Jerusalem; who, when all his disciples had fled, watched with an agony of their own the agony of their Master on Calvary, marked the spot where his body was laid, and went to tend it lovingly when the Sabbath was past. Of these loving and faithful women, who, according to Luke, were many, we know the names of Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James the less and Joses; Joanna the wife of Chuza, one of Herod's officials; Salome, the mother of James and John; and one Susanna. Some of them were women whom Jesus had healed of dæmons or diseases. They ministered to the needs of Jesus and his disciples out of their means.

Of these the greatest, in many senses, was Mary of

Magdala. From her Jesus had cast out 'seven dæmons.' Whether that means she had been most grievously afflicted in mind, or that she had been a great sinner, there is no means of telling from the phrase itself. But the phrase is a strong one. Mentally or morally she had been in a desperate condition, and Jesus had cured her. She followed him with a devotion as desperate as her past condition.

In the gospel narratives she always appears at the head of the devoted women: she was the chief among them. The certain facts we know of her are few: that she came from Magdala in Galilee, that Jesus cast the seven dæmons out of her, that she followed him to Jerusalem, and that she played the lovely and familiar part after his agony and death. That is all we *know* definitely of Mary of Magdala. Of these facts one little one is worth insistence: she was the head of the three women who went, when the Sabbath was past, 'and bought some spices in order to go and anoint the body of Jesus.'

But there is in the Gospel of Luke another Mary – or one whom Luke thought to be another Mary – than any of these, Mary the sister of Martha, of whom Luke tells the exquisite story, which cannot be fixed either in place or time.

'As they were journeying he came into a village. And a woman named Martha received him into her house. She had a sister called Mary who sat at Jesus' feet and listened to his word. But Martha was

distraught by having so much to do. She came forward and said:

'"Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do everything by myself? Speak to her, and make her lend a hand."

'The Lord answered:

'"Martha, Martha! You are worried and upset about a host of things: but few are necessary – perhaps only one. Mary has chosen the better portion, and it shall not be taken from her."'

The glimpse is lovely. But there is no more. So far as the pure historian is concerned, what we know of Mary the sister of Martha begins and ends with that story. The rest depends upon 'John,' and 'John' is not a credible witness. But 'John' was not only a religious genius: he was also a great artist. His intuition, or his guess, must be considered.

'John' had before him the synoptists – or at least Mark and Luke – in some form or other, when he wrote his gospel. He treated his material with the freedom of genius. He identified Mary the sister of Martha with the woman who shortly before the betrayal anointed Jesus' head; he also reduced the disciples who protested against the extravagance to one disciple and identified him with Judas Iscariot. It is what any artist, having the story of Mark before him, would long to do. But Mark gives no authority. 'John's' boldest act of all – if we except the whole creation of his great book – was to identify Lazarus,

the purely imaginary figure of Luke's parable, with the actual Simon the Leper at whose house in Bethany Jesus was lodging when the woman anointed him; and to make Lazarus the brother of Martha and Mary. This was a stroke of true creative genius: thus Shakespeare might have handled his material: but the result is not history, but imaginative art.

The last identification does not concern the historian. The raising of Lazarus is a miracle deliberately invented by a religious genius. The relation between Martha and Mary, who were real people, and Lazarus, who was an imaginary character in a parable, is not one over which the seeker of fact need linger. But the identification of Mary the sister of Martha with the woman who anointed Jesus before his death in Simon the Leper's house at Bethany must give one pause, by reason of its intrinsic plausibility. The identification was an act, so far as we can tell, of the free spirit: there seems no reason to suppose that 'John' was in possession of any 'tradition' in this matter. In the eyes of the literary critic it is but a part of the invented Lazarus legend, and lies under the same suspicion.

But once made, the identification imposes itself, not by reason of 'John's' historical authority (for he possesses very little), but by the power of its own intrinsic beauty. Psychologically it is perfectly fitting that the otherwise unknown Mary of Luke's story should be the woman who did 'the lovely

thing' to Jesus. Psychologically it is perfectly fitting that the woman who anointed Jesus' head before his betrayal should be the Mary of Magdala who went out early in the morning of the third day to buy spices to embalm the body of her dead Master. The identification is impossible to resist. If Mary the sister of Martha was the woman who anointed Jesus' head, then Mary the sister of Martha was Mary of Magdala. That is not a logical argument; but it is, in a very precise sense, a psychological argument.

But the probabilities do not end there: for Luke, who tells the story of Martha and Mary, does not tell the story of the anointing of Jesus' head. In its stead he tells a story which belongs to a different period in the life of Jesus: how Jesus was asked to dine by a Pharisee called Simon.

'And entering into the Pharisee's house, he reclined at table. And lo! there was a woman in the city, a sinner, who knowing that he was in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster phial of myrrh, and standing behind him at his feet weeping, began to wet his feet with her tears; and she wiped them with the hair of her head, and went on kissing his feet and anointing them with the myrrh.

'And the Pharisee who had invited him said to himself: "If this man were a prophet he would have known who and what the woman is who touches him."

'Jesus answered his thought and said:

'"Simon! I have something to say to you."

'"Master, say it!" said Simon.

'"A certain lender had two debtors. One owed him fifty pounds, the other five. Since they had not the money to repay him, he forgave them both. Which of them will love him the more?"

'Simon answered: "I suppose the man to whom he forgave the most."

'Jesus said to him: "You have judged right."

'And, turning towards the woman, he said to Simon:

'"You see this woman? I came into your house: you poured no water on my feet. But she wetted my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You kissed me not: but she, from entering, has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil; but she has anointed my feet with myrrh. Therefore I say to you: her sins, her many sins, are forgiven because she loved much. He to whom little is forgiven, loves but little."

'And he said to her:

'"Your sins are forgiven."

'And his fellow-guests began to say to themselves: "Who is this, that forgives sins also?"

'But he said to the woman:

'"Your faith has saved you. Go, enjoy your peace."'

Again, a lovely story; but obviously it is a totally different story from that of the woman who anointed

Jesus' head unto burial. In Luke's mind, however, they have been partially fused together. He gives this one and not the other; and this one happens in the house of a Pharisee called Simon; the other in the house of Simon the Leper. Evidently there were two stories. Luke knew one well, the other only vaguely; Mark knew the other well, this one not at all. Both stories are distinct: both have the beauty of truth, the truth of beauty written on them.

Again, it is impossible to resist the conclusion that they are two stories of the same woman, and that the woman is Mary of Magdala – one who sinned much, one from whom seven dæmons were cast out, one who loved much. One cannot refuse the identification. If we accept it, the whole story of Mary of Magdala falls into an harmonious pattern.

It was in the city of Magdala that Mary met Jesus. Matthew tells of Jesus' returning in the boat from his secret place in the mountains to a place on the western side of the Lake called Magadan. Mark calls it Dalmanutha. Some manuscripts of Matthew write definitely Magdala. Suppose it was Magdala, for time and place cohere. It was during one of Jesus' 'descents' into Galilee.

There Mary, the great sinner, the woman of the town, heard Jesus tell of the Kingdom of God, how not they who were righteous, but those who would turn and be changed, should enter into it. She heard, as countless millions of sinners after her have heard, and for ever will hear, the wonderful news of a

loving God. 'There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over the ninety and nine that need not repentance.' That, when all is said and done, was the most wonderful declaration of the nature of God that man has ever made. On the day those words were said the world began to change, in a manner not cognizable by science; on that day forgiveness began to be a faculty of the human soul. Perhaps Mary of Magdala heard him say, perhaps it was she who remembered, the words that have eased millions of hearts:

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'

'Rest unto her soul.' The great sinner sought and found it. The seven dæmons departed from her, by the power of Jesus.

She heard that he was at dinner in a house in the town. She brought her phial of perfume of myrrh, the precious possession of the courtesan, and stood behind Jesus, weeping, as he lay on the couch beside the table. Her tears fell on his feet. She wiped them with her hair. She kissed his feet again and again, and poured the perfume over them. She said no word: there was nothing to say.

She loved much, because she had been forgiven much. As desperate as her condition had been, so desperate was her love. And once again she heard

the unbelievable words: 'Your sins are forgiven. Go into peace.'

She lived with her sister Martha. The courtesan of the East does not hide her head, or live in exile from her family. With her perfumes and her lovers she had fared easily. Martha had been the woman of the house. And so she remained, now that Mary had entered into peace. Jesus came into their house and Mary sat crouched at his feet listening to the words of the divine man on whom her new, transfigured power of love was set. And Martha appealed to Jesus to tell her to lend a hand. What Jesus bade her, that she would do. And Jesus would not. He answered:

'Martha, Martha! You are worried and upset about a host of things: but few are necessary – perhaps only one. Mary has chosen the better portion, and it shall not be taken away from her.'

What was the one thing that was necessary? There can be but one answer: it was love. Necessary in the profoundest sense: without love, and love's understanding, no one could enter the Kingdom. Necessary perhaps also to Jesus, the lonely man. He who had put away mother and brothers felt the comfort and the need of simple human love. Through love he could be understood.

He accepted the love of Mary. She followed him on his bitter journey to Jerusalem. Through the power of her love she understood what the minds of his disciples could not understand: that his love of

mankind was driving him to offer himself deliberately to death as a great sacrifice for men.

On the eve of his sacrifice, she beautifully bethought herself of her former gesture: then she had anointed his feet, now she would anoint his head. He had become for her the Christ, the anointed one: by her hand he should be anointed to his destiny. She bought an alabaster phial of oil of spikenard – a royal perfume at a royal price – and came to him where he lay at table in the house of Simon the Leper. She broke the phial and poured the precious oil upon his head. Some of the company were vexed. They grumbled at what seemed to them a wanton waste. They said the essence might have been sold for twenty pounds and the money given to the poor. And they turned upon Mary with angry words.

Jesus said:

'Leave her alone. Why do you trouble the woman? She has wrought a lovely work upon me. For you have the poor always with you, and you can do them good whenever you will; but me you have not always. She has done all she could. She has anointed my body beforehand for my burial.

'Yes, and I tell you this: wherever the good news shall be proclaimed throughout the world, men shall speak of what she has done in remembrance of me.'

A lovely work – a thing of beauty. It is the only recorded instance of Jesus' use of such a phrase, or such a thought. He spoke beauty, saw beauty, was

beauty; but this once alone did he speak of it. The sheer perfection of her gesture was a language he could understand; perhaps she had learned it from him. She had learned, through love and his example, to do what she could perfectly. No living creature has ever done more than that. Of no single one of Jesus' disciples could so much be said.

6

THE LAST SUPPER

In the account of the last two days of the life of Jesus given by the synoptists there is a small confusion. All agree that Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples on the 14th Nisan, which was Friday; yet all agree in representing him as crucified and buried on the same day, as lying in the tomb during the Sabbath Saturday, and risen on the Sunday. It is impossible to reconcile these statements.

The cause of the confusion seems clear. The Last Supper inevitably occupied so cherished and honoured a place in the memory of his disciples and in the ritual of the Early Church, that it became indistinguishable from the Jewish Passover itself. The day of the great sacrificial feast which replaced the Passover was identified with the day of the Passover.

It was not the Jewish Passover that Jesus bade his disciples prepare that he might eat it with them. The Last Supper took place on the night of Thursday, and not on the night of Friday. It was indeed necessary that this should be so, for Jesus was himself to be the Paschal Lamb of the new covenant, and had determined that he would die on the 14th Nisan. He died on that day at about three o'clock: at about the same hour began the killing of the Passover lambs in the Temple for the Passover meal that night.

If it be asked how could Jesus predetermine so profound and symbolic a conjuncture, it must be freely admitted that, for lack of evidence, we cannot give a detailed account of the means by which he achieved his end. But broadly we hold it to be probable that after carefully concealing his movements, save when he appeared in broad daylight in the Temple with a crowd of willing hearers, at his chosen moment he offered himself to capture, and at the same time arranged that the secret that he was Messiah should be betrayed to the priestly authorities of Jerusalem. Whether Judas was in this the conscious servant of Jesus' purpose, or whether Jesus made him his unconscious instrument – these things are beyond our finding out. Imagination would incline us to the former choice.

On the day before the Passover Jesus sent two of his disciples – Luke names them: Peter and John – from Bethany into Jerusalem. He had arranged with someone in the city for a room to be prepared where he could eat his last farewell supper with his disciples undisturbed. He needed to keep his movements hidden, above all at night; and he had arranged a secret sign with the owner of the room so that he should be known to the disciples, and they to him. They would find a man with a pitcher of water in a certain street; him they were to follow into the house which he would enter. They were then to ask the master of the house the question which Jesus told them:

'The Master says: Where is my room that I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'

They did as he bade them: they followed the man with the pitcher and put their question to the master of the house. He led them to a large upper room ready laid with couches. There the two disciples prepared the meal.

It was not the Passover meal, though doubtless Jesus meant it to be a ceremony both like and unlike the old. There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of the words in which he spoke of it to his disciples as 'this Passover'; or, in the great question, to doubt that he was establishing a solemn and symbolic feast. We need not call upon Paul's evidence that this ritual commemoration was firmly established in the very earliest days of the Church, for if the main tenor of this narrative is true, a solemn dedication of himself to his purpose is what we expect of Jesus at this moment: a solemn dedication of himself is what the synoptists record.

But between the three accounts a choice must be made. Matthew follows the bald and brief account of Mark. Luke's account is detailed and peculiar: it seems to be the more original. Whereas Mark's account appears to be a reminiscence of the ritual of the early community, Luke's account gives the impression of an authentic personal recollection of the actual happenings in the upper room in Jerusalem.

At the beginning of the supper Jesus said:

'With a great desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.'

Then he took a cup in his hands and gave praise to God, and said:

'Take this and share it among yourselves. For I tell you, I shall drink no more of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in the Kingdom of God.'

It was an earnest of the meal he would partake with the sons of the Kingdom when the end had come, and he had returned, as Messiah, to judge the world by its love, and establish the Kingdom of God for ever.

But as the supper ended, the bread and wine which they shared took on a yet deeper symbolic meaning for Jesus. They were not merely the earnest of the great feast of the Kingdom, of which he had spoken in parables; they were symbols of his body and his blood that were to be given that the Kingdom of God might come.

Therefore he took bread and gave praise, and broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:

'This is my body which is given for you.'

And after supper, he once more took the cup and gave praise, and gave it them all to drink, saying:

'This is my covenant-blood that is poured out for many.'

Jesus was the willing sacrifice whose blood sealed

the new covenant between man and God. Why should the authenticity of his words be doubted? Surely so great a man as he, going forward to his lonely and wonderful destiny, was capable of such a thought. At this moment the ends of the world were come upon him: he was indeed many things in his own sight, as he has been many things to the after-time.

Then he said:

'Verily I tell you that one of you will betray me – one that has eaten with me.'

Sorrowfully they began to ask him one by one: 'Can it be I?'

He said to them again:

'It is one of the twelve – one that has dipped with me into the dish. For the Son of Man goes the way of his destiny.'

Was this the signal for Judas? Were the famous words that follow really spoken?

'But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.'

Then, while the disciples sought for a sign of the betrayer, they fell once more into the old dispute: who was to be the greatest among them in the coming Kingdom. The old question who should sit on his right hand, who on his left, emerged again.

He said:

'The kings of the heathen lord it over them, and those that have authority over them are called

"Benefactors." But you must not be as they. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be the slave of all. Which is greater? He that dines or he that serves? Is it not he that dines? But I am in your midst as a server. For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

'But you are they who have stood by me in my trials. And I will give you kingship as my Father has given it to me, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel.'

The supper was ended and they sang a psalm. Probably it was the Passover Psalm – the same 118th Psalm which had been running in Jesus' mind when he disputed in the Temple, the great psalm of victory out of defeat. Then he led the way to the Mount of Olives.

Under cover of darkness Judas slipped from the company to tell the Sanhedrin where they might find the Master, and to lead their servants to the olive garden of Gethsemane where he would await the arrest. On the way thither Jesus said:

'You will all be offended in me. It is written: "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." '

Then he turned to Simon:

'Simon, Simon! Satan has demanded all of you to winnow you like corn. But I have prayed for thee

that thy faith may not fail. Do thou turn and make thy brothers firm.'

Simon answered:

'Even though all are offended, yet I will not be.'

Jesus said:

'Truly I tell you that this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me thrice.'

Simon was the more vehement.

'Even if I must die with you, yet I will not deny you.'

And all the disciples said the same.

Jesus said:

'When I sent you out without purse, or wallet, did you want for anything?'

They answered:

'Nothing.'

He said:

'But now let him that has a purse take it, and a wallet also; and let him that has none, sell his coat and buy a sword. For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: "And he was counted a malefactor." For the things concerning me now have their end.'

They said:

'Master, there are two swords here.'

'It is enough,' Jesus answered.

The disciples were literal to the last. If Jesus spoke of swords, they must be real swords. The irony of 'It is enough' was lost upon them.

The words are precious. It would be hard indeed

to doubt the authenticity of their sad irony. If they are accepted, it follows that Jesus used the words, 'And he was counted a malefactor,' of himself on his last night on earth. That is to say, it was Jesus himself and not after-generations who saw him prefigured in the 'Suffering Servant' of 53rd Isaiah. That this was so we are convinced; but modern criticism, lacking here as in so many places the flexibility of mind to conceive the creative power of a great spirit, has tended more and more to deny that Jesus could thus have conceived himself.

Jesus did thus conceive himself, from his conception he wrung out the courage of his lonely sacrifice. Those who would deny that it was possible forget that the only reason why they are still passionately concerned with his life-story is that he was the greatest man of whom memory remains.

7

THE TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

When Jesus and the eleven had come to the garden of Gethsemane, he took Peter and James and John apart from the others. He was in agony.

'My soul is sorrowful,' he said, 'sorrowful to death. Wait here and keep awake.' He went forward a little from them and fell upon the ground, and prayed that the hour might pass away from him if it were possible.

'*Abba!*' he prayed. 'Father, all things are possible to Thee. Take this cup away from me. Yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt.'

The disciples heard no more. It was late, past midnight, and they were drowsy with the stress of Jesus' great farewell. They could not keep awake. The long, long prayers of Jesus in the night, when the son of God communed with his Father and struggled from agony of spirit into peace, had overborne them before. They stood apart from the mystery: no tension of soul maintained them: they were weary and they slept.

He came and woke them:

'Asleep, Simon? You could not keep awake one single hour? Keep awake and pray that you be not made to endure the trial. For the spirit is eager, but the flesh is weak.'

Again he went from them, and again they

heard the same *Abba!* and again they heard no more.

And again he came to them. They blinked at him with their heavy eyes and had no word to say.

Not one watcher with him; not one to warn him of the approach of his enemies. He was lonely indeed. Perhaps he prayed once more that the cup might pass from him; perhaps he only sat watching for the light of the torches through the dark. He saw the lights, and heard the voices; then he came to the three disciples for the last time.

'Still sleeping?' he said. 'Still resting? The time is past. The moment is come. Now the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Awake! Up! My betrayer is here.'

Even while he spoke, Judas was there, at the head of a company armed with swords and staves. He made straight for Jesus, spoke the single word *Rabbi!* and kissed the Master. At the sign the men laid hands upon him.

Jesus said:

'So you have come to take me, like a robber, with swords and staves. I was among you, teaching in the Temple every day, yet you did not touch me.'

For a brief moment Jesus' followers showed fight. One of them, who held one of the two swords, struck a blow at a servant of the High-Priest, and inflicted some small wound. But not with Jesus' will: his bitter word concerning the two swords had been misunderstood.

'Put up your sword,' he said. 'For those that take the sword shall perish by the sword.'

Then all his disciples fled. Only one unnamed youth made the attempt to remain at Jesus' side. This surely must have been John Mark himself, afterwards the author of the gospel which alone records his presence. Perhaps it was in his mother's house that the Last Supper was held; certainly in the early years of the Church at Jerusalem his mother's house was a stronghold of the new faith. We may suppose that John Mark, then a boy, was wakened by the singing of the Passover Psalm. He saw Jesus leading the disciples to Gethsemane in the night. His boyish curiosity was aroused, and he snatched a sheet from the bed to cover himself, and followed. He watched and listened to the agony in the garden, saw the arrest of Jesus and the flight of his disciples. But when the guards seized him, his courage failed, and he fled naked, leaving the sheet in their hands.

The guards took Jesus to the house of the High-Priest. There they held him prisoner in a room that opened on to the great courtyard, wherein a fire was lit. To amuse themselves while they waited for the day his captors blindfolded him and beat him about the head, and called upon the prophet from Nazareth to prophesy who it was that beat him.

Meanwhile Peter's courage had returned. He followed from a distance and bravely made his way into the courtyard. He sat down among the crowd of servants gathered round the fire. From where he

was he could see his Master in the lighted room and his Master could see his face in the light of the fire.

Suddenly a maidservant caught sight of him and stared: she remembered his face: she had seen him in the Temple at Jesus' side. She called out: 'You too were with Jesus the Nazarene!'

In the hush Peter's voice could be heard in the room where Jesus was.

'I do not know what you are talking about; I do not understand.'

He went out of the courtyard into the outer court. As he went, the maidservant watched him and again told the servants standing by: 'That is one of them.' They challenged him again, and he again denied it.

After awhile he came back into the courtyard. He felt safe again, and began to speak to the servants. His accent or his dialect made them suspicious. 'You must be one of them,' they said. 'For you are from Galilee.'

Then Peter swore with an oath: 'I do not know the man of whom you speak.'

The cock crew. Jesus, who had heard Peter's denial, turned round and glanced at him. Peter went outside and burst into tears.

At dawn the Sanhedrin gathered together in the High-Priest's house and Jesus was taken before it. An attempt was made to convict him by witnesses of blasphemy against the Temple. He was charged with having said that if the Temple were destroyed,

he would raise it up again; but the witnesses contradicted one another. Whether this was a serious attempt to secure his formal condemnation for blasphemy, we cannot say. Too little is known of the procedure of the Sanhedrin in those days; it is not even known whether there was what we should call procedure at all.

To all the witnesses, whatever they witnessed, to all the questions, whatever the questions, Jesus made no reply. The word of the prophet had entered his soul. 'As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.'

Then the High-Priest asked the secret which Judas had betrayed to him:

'Are you Messiah the King, the Son of the Blessed One?'

There was no silence now. Jesus answered:

'I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'

The High-Priest rent his robe.

'What further need have we of witness? You have heard his blasphemy. What is your judgment?'

They all judged him worthy of death.

Then Jesus was bound and led to Pilate. The whole Sanhedrin went with him. They laid their accusations: he had seduced the Jewish nation, he had spoken against paying tribute to Cæsar, and he had called himself Messiah-King.

The word King struck Pilate: perhaps only that

it was pathetically incongruous. Those who can believe that an unearthly royalty of a mysterious King of men shone in Jesus' face at that moment, for one not passion-blind, may find another cause for Pilate's question and his strange judgment on the answer.

'Are you the King of the Jews?' he asked.

'You have said it,' Jesus answered.

Was it strange or not that Pilate should have declared he found no crime in that reply? Was Jesus just a harmless visionary to a Roman weary, like Gallio, of the tumults of Jewish fanaticism? Or did one who stood apart have a glimpse of some incomprehensible nobility, a fleeting insight that the silent captive before him was the first of a new race of men – that he was one whose kingdom was indeed not of the world the Roman knew?

But whether the reply seems strange or not, there is surely no reason to hold with certain scholars that Pilate's reluctance was invented by the early Christians in order to throw the odium of Jesus' condemnation wholly upon the Jews. Nothing is more probable than that Pilate was not only indifferent to the matter in itself, but repelled by the fanatic violence of Jesus' captors: it is the attitude we should expect of a Roman governor in Jerusalem.

Why should we not believe that Pilate's curiosity was roused by the behaviour of the captive? His silence before a torrent of accusations alone might give Pilate pause. Was there not a majesty visible in

the face of a man whose spirit was to change the history of the world?

Pilate wondered, and was reluctant to condemn.

But the Sanhedrin grew more vehement: he was sowing revolution among the people by his teaching: he had begun in Galilee, now he had reached Jerusalem.

The word Galilee gave Pilate a loophole. Was the man a Galilean? he asked. He was. Then Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, now here in Jerusalem for the feast, must have his say. He would send Jesus to Herod. Moreover, he would take the chance of doing a courtesy to the tetrarch from whom he had been estranged. To Herod Jesus was sent.

Herod had long been curious about him. He had wondered about Jesus when he first heard of him, after his unwilling execution of John the Baptist. The thought that he might be John the Baptist risen from the dead had troubled him. Now Jesus stood before him.

To Herod's curious questions – concerning, as we may guess, the repute of his miraculous powers – Jesus made no reply. The chief-priests and the scribes stood by, making vehement accusation against him. But Herod and his courtiers made light of him, made a joke of him even, and dressed him in a splendid robe, and sent him back to Pilate.

The Græcized Antipas shared Pilate's attitude. The King of the Jews was not to be taken seriously as a malefactor or a revolutionary. And probably

Herod had no desire to have the blood of yet another prophet upon his head. There is nothing in the actual words of Luke to suggest that Antipas behaved to Jesus with worse than a Hellenistic indifference – the counterpart of Pilate's own.

Pilate called the Sanhedrin before him, and said: 'You brought this man before me as a revolutionary agitator. I examined him in your presence and found in him no evidence that he is guilty of what you accuse him. No, neither did Herod. For I referred the man to him. Nothing he has done is worthy of death. I will teach him a lesson and let him go.'

While Pilate was addressing the Sanhedrin the people came forward to ask for the customary release of a prisoner at the great feast. Pilate asked them if he should release the King of the Jews. We imagine that if he spoke a little in kindness, he spoke more with the desire to annoy the insistent members of the Sanhedrin: for the proposal to release Jesus utterly was nothing less than an insult to them. The Sanhedrin itself possessed large powers of punishment: only the death-sentence was beyond their competence. Pilate was trying to outwit them.

They were now mingled with the people before Pilate's judgment-seat; and they used their opportunity. They urged the people to demand that one Bar-Abbas, who lay in prison for factious riot, should be released, and Jesus be crucified. And the crowd cried accordingly:

'Take this man, and release Bar-Abbas!'

'What then,' asked Pilate, 'shall I do to him you call the King of the Jews?'

'Crucify him!' roared the crowd.

'Why, what evil has he done?'

'Crucify him!'

Matthew tells that in the uproar Pilate had a basin of water brought to him, and washed his hands in the full sight of the crowd, to signify that he disclaimed all responsibility. If his voice could not be heard, his gesture could be seen. It may have been so; as it may also have been that, as Matthew also tells, the wife of Pilate sent him a message, as he sat on the judgment-seat, bidding him have no part in the death of that just man, for she had suffered much in a dream concerning him.

One cannot pronounce for or against these things. The two stories hang together. The message from his wife supplies the motive for Pilate's extreme demonstration of his own innocence. If on the one hand the final roar of the crowd, which Matthew relates, 'His blood be upon us and on our children,' has a suspicious ring, on the other hand the story of the dream and the message is persuasive. It was the early morning still. Pilate's wife might well have been awakened from a dream and looked out from her window to find the figure she had dreamed of standing before her husband's judgment-seat. It is not necessary even that, to have dreamed of Jesus or of one like him, Pilate's wife need have seen him:

but surely there is no reason why she should not have seen the prophet from Nazareth as he taught in the Temple or passed through the streets of Jerusalem. The story is one that we can neither refuse with certainty nor accept with conviction.

But why (it is sometimes asked) had the crowd, which had heard Jesus gladly when he spoke in the Temple, so quickly turned against him? There is surely no problem here. For the mob a prophet in chains is no longer a prophet; but a brigand in fetters, like Bar-Abbas, has, on the contrary, achieved his perfection. Between Bar-Abbas and Jesus, no longer standing his ground with the doctors in the Temple, but now silent and captive, the popular choice was certain.

But beyond this cogent reason is the cardinal fact that the people now knew that Jesus claimed to be King-Messiah. That Mighty One, whose coming John the Baptist had foretold, Jesus claimed to be. And the people learned of this claim at the moment that he appeared before them as a captive criminal. As he stood there silent, Jesus was to the common Jew the incarnation of a blasphemy.

Pilate bowed to the insistence of the Sanhedrin and the clamour of the mob. He released Bar-Abbas, and ordered Jesus to be scourged and crucified.

He was taken by his guards into the soldiers' quarters: and the whole cohort assembled round him. To the kingly robe in which Herod's retinue had dressed him, they added the adornment of a crown of

thorns; and they made jeering obeisance to him, saying. 'Hail, King of the Jews!' After a little while they formed in order and marched out of the castle, with Jesus and two other criminals in their midst, each bearing the cross upon which he was to be crucified.

But Jesus was too weak for the burden. As the company reached the gate of the city, the centurion impressed into the service a man who was coming in from the fields, and compelled him to carry Jesus' cross. The man's name has been saved from oblivion, because his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, eventually became members of the Early Church: his name was Simon, and his place of origin Cyrene. Thus reordered the company marched on to the place of execution. If it was called Golgotha from its shape, as is probable, it was a bare rounded hillock, and it lay somewhere to the north of the city.

What we know of the story of the Crucifixion would seem to rest upon the evidence of Simon. Not one of the disciples was there, and the women who had followed him remained far off from the actual execution. Executions were as much a spectacle for the Jewish mob as they were in later times for the Christian; and now it was angry as well as bloodthirsty, for Jesus had outraged its fanatical idealism. There was good reason for the women to stand remote, and for the disciples to hide themselves completely, if they valued their lives. But the pre-

sence of Simon the Cyrene gave the Christian Church a witness of the closing scenes. He was with Jesus on the march to Calvary; he was with Jesus at the Cross.

Therefore we need not doubt that the words ascribed by Luke to Jesus on the way were veritably spoken. Not everyone was hostile: in the accompanying crowd were weeping women, to whom Jesus turned and said:

'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me! Weep for yourselves and your children; for lo! the days are coming wherein they shall say: "Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne, and the breast which never gave suck." Then they shall say to the mountains, "Fall upon us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" If this is what they do in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?'

And again, just before he was fastened to the cross, he said:

'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'

He was offered a drink of wine mixed with myrrh, an anodyne, but he refused it. Whatever was to come to him, he would receive it with an unclouded mind.

He was stripped of his clothes, and his guards drew lots for them. The royal robe which Herod had put upon him would have been a treasure to a soldier. There is no reason to suppose that the incident was invented in order to 'fulfil' a prophecy;

it was the most natural thing in the world. Simon of Cyrene, as he worked with some of the soldiers at erecting the cross, watched all the others did. One was stripping Jesus of his clothes, another with rough kindliness trying to persuade him to drink the wine and myrrh, another spreading out his clothes upon the ground, another putting stones in a helmet for them to draw lots, another making ready the rough inscription to fix upon the cross:

THE KING OF THE JEWS.

It was about nine o'clock when Jesus' hands and feet were nailed, and the two robbers crucified on either side of him. Not one of his disciples was near; the faithful women stood watching and weeping from afar. Between them and the cross was a hideous crowd of angry and degraded men, jeering at the dying Master.

'Ha! you that would destroy the Temple and build it again in three days, save yourself and come down from the cross!'

The members of the Sanhedrin, who had come out to see their justice done, spoke more decorously to one another:

'He "saved" others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, now descend from the cross that we may see and believe!'

Even the criminals at his side reviled him.

At about twelve o'clock a dark cloud obscured the sun, and gloom settled on the desolate place. Jesus

had been on the cross three hours; in three hours more the end was come. He had chosen to remain conscious. What were his thoughts?

He was waiting, waiting, for the ineffable moment when he should be lifted up into the bosom of God the Father, whom he had found and whom he had served as a son to the bitter and glorious end. He was waiting for the moment when his inevitable destiny should be accomplished and he be summoned to his seat on God's right hand.

He waited, while his mortal life narrowed to a tiny spark; and nothing came.

Then he uttered all he was into one great despairing cry:

'*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'

They are the same as the opening words of the 22nd Psalm. It may conceivably be that that despairing song had been throbbing through his soul while he hung in pain and ignominy:

All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
They shoot out the lip: they toss the head:
'He trusted in the Lord! Let the Lord rescue him!
Let the Lord rescue him, if He careth for him.'

But the voice of utter despair is ever the same. The cry 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' has been wrung from human lips many times in human history: but never till then, and never again, from the lips of such a man.

With that cry, his living soul left his body. The bond which had held it there, in an agony of expectation, had snapped.

Some, hearing the words, *Eloi*, *Eloi*, believed he was calling on Elijah. One man ran and fetched a sponge soaked in vinegar, which he stretched out on a stick to Jesus' lips. It was too late. There was another great cry, but it had no words. It was the cry of death itself.

The manner of Jesus' death was strange. It had been swift: six hours was but a little time for a man to remain alive on the cross. He had grown weak in the tension of his last days: he could not carry his cross. But the end had come with a strange suddenness. For the soul of Jesus had kept his body alive. When despair had gained his soul, death at that moment gained his body.

At one moment the very pinnacle of consciousness: at the next, darkness and death.

The captain of the guards was struck to the heart by the strange happenings and said: 'Truly this man was a son of God!'

EPILOGUE

The disciples had fled at Jesus' arrest. They were utterly dispersed. Simon had persisted for awhile; but he also had fled. The only followers who had been present at the Crucifixion had been women, and they had stood far away. They were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses, and Salome; they had followed Jesus in Galilee, and from Galilee to Jerusalem: there were other women also.

Jesus had died at three o'clock. The two Marys waited and watched, not daring to approach. At about an hour before sunset, when the Sabbath and the Sabbath obligations would begin, they saw a man whom they did not know come to the cross, bearing a linen sheet. With the help of the captain and the soldiers he took down the body of Jesus, wrapped it hurriedly in the linen sheet he had brought, and carried it away to a rock-tomb near by. From afar they saw him enter the hole in the rock, then emerge without his burden. Then he rolled a heavy stone against the door, and hastened away. The two women did not dare to draw near, for the soldiers were still standing guard by the crucified thieves. They tried to mark the grave, and themselves hurried away. Their dead Master might do as he would with the Sabbath: but not they.

The unknown man whom they had seen thus hastily burying Jesus was one Joseph of Arimathea.

He was a member of the Sanhedrin and a man of substance; and he was a pious Jew. The legend that he was a secret disciple of Jesus rests upon no stronger foundation than an attempt by the later evangelists to elaborate the bare story of Mark. 'He expected the Kingdom of God,' says Mark. So did many Jews, but not as Jesus had expected it, nor now through Jesus' sacrifice. Had Joseph indeed been the secret disciple of Jesus he would not have buried his Master without anointing. The author of the Fourth Gospel knew this and invented the story of Joseph and Nicodemus bringing with them a hundredweight of myrrh and aloes, and 'wrapping up the body of Jesus in the spices and in bandages according to the Jewish custom of burial.'

Had Joseph indeed done that, the two Marys, who were the witnesses of his action, would not have risen early on Sunday to buy spices and embalm Jesus. What they bravely resolved to do would have been done already. Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus hurriedly and roughly, as the story of Mark clearly shows. The other accounts are palpably attempts to construct a more edifying narrative. Joseph seems to have behaved simply as a pious member of the Sanhedrin, who was anxious to obey the Law of Deuteronomy:

'If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt surely bury him that day.'

Nor is it possible to say whether, in asking Pilate for Jesus' body and burying it, he was moved by pious scruples of his own or was acting on behalf of the Sanhedrin.

It was because they saw that Jesus had been thus rudely buried that the women resolved to buy spices at the streak of dawn on Sunday and do their tender offices. It was a brave resolve. Known followers of the crucified prophet would have had short shrift. The Galilean disciples had all fled before the storm. Probably not one of them remained in angry Jerusalem.

On the morning of the Sunday, then, they went fearfully out to the place where they had marked the rock-tomb. And as they went they wondered how they would be able to move the stone. They had not dared to ask anyone to help them, for they were engaged on a dangerous and unlawful errand. When they reached the tomb they were astonished and alarmed to see that the stone had been rolled away from the opening. They crept inside. Their hearts dropped a beat: before them stood a young man. They had mistaken the tomb, and their errand had been discovered.

'Do not be afraid,' he called, as they turned and fled. 'You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth. He is not here: that is the place where he was laid. . . .'

But they stayed to hear no more. They told no one of their adventure. There was no one for them to tell. The Galilean disciples had fled from Jerusalem, back to their native land.

The women also now returned forlorn to Galilee, disappointed of their hope of doing the last piety to their Master. There the disciples, ashamed of their cowardice, forgathered again. Whether the women told Simon first of their adventure at the tomb, or whether Peter first had his experience of Jesus' continued existence, it is impossible to say. Nor can we tell how long it was before Peter had his experience. But when he was convinced that his Lord still lived and that he had seen him, the women remembered what they had done at the tomb and what the young man had told them there: but they remembered it with a difference. The young man had told that Jesus was risen; nay, more, he had told them expressly to tell the disciples – Simon particularly – that Jesus would go before them into Galilee; there would they see him. It was not hard to prophesy so much, now that Simon had seen him.

How long was it before the disciples took heart and returned to Jerusalem, where, the example of Jesus had taught them, the victory of the new faith must be won? We do not know. A whole pregnant chapter of the history of the Early Church had to be sacrificed to cover the traces of the disciples' own defection and despair. It was deemed necessary to represent that the disciples had expected the death of Jesus, and his resurrection on the third day, 'according to the Scriptures,' just as it was deemed necessary that Jesus should have foretold these things; it was therefore necessary to conceal all traces of that

despairing flight to Galilee. In Luke's Gospel and his Acts we can see the process of expurgation visibly at work. The disciples, according to the new orthodoxy, never left Jerusalem. Doctrine was transmuting history.

But the only impregnable doctrine is history. To history belongs the reality of Simon's experience of the continued existence of Jesus. It was real and it was decisive; as Paul's also was real and decisive. Paul's is the earliest evidence we have for the resurrection; and Paul's language in the fifteenth chapter of Corinthians shows that he considered Peter's vision to have been of precisely the same kind as his own, and further that he himself did not believe in a resurrection of the physical body ('Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God'), but in a resurrection into a spiritual body. And, since Paul received his doctrine from Peter, we need not doubt that Paul's conviction was Peter's own.

The conviction of the continued life of Jesus in a 'spiritual body,' reached first by Simon Peter in Galilee, is the reality behind the conflicting and mutually destructive stories of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Of the reality of this conviction, of the reality of the experience that created this conviction, we cannot doubt. The great Christian Church was built, not on a lie, but on a truth. Nor can we doubt that this experience of Peter, like the later experience of Paul, was the experience of an objective presence. Peter was not the victim of an

hallucination, nor Paul the dupe of an illusion. That our intellects cannot conceive the nature of an objective presence which is not physical, and that a 'spiritual body' remains for our minds a contradiction in terms, is only evidence that our minds are still inadequate to reality.

The spiritual body of Jesus exists and is immortal. Some make their life-giving contact with it through the Eucharist; for others that contact is impossible. But they, through the effort of making the earthly life of Jesus real to themselves, find their souls possessed by love and veneration for the Prince of men. A fount of living water is unsealed in them.

And it may be that this, and this alone, is the great *Christian* experience, ultimate and eternal, though our ways to it must be our own. Of those ways, we may say this, that if they shall truly bring us to the Jesus who is eternal, they must be ways which do not compel us to make sacrifice of aught we truly believe, and know, and are. Of one thing we may be certain: that Jesus would rather be denied by a true man than professed by a liar. He would not have us less than men; and we shall lose nothing by remaining men, of our own century and our own country. At the last we shall greatly gain. We shall look like men, on the man Jesus. He will stand our scrutiny. Keep we our heads as high as we can, they shall be bowed at the last. And, without abating one jot of what we truly believe and know and are,

we shall, with absolute sincerity, make the words of the great doctor of the English Church our own:

'"Look upon him, till he look back upon us again." For so he will.

'And if we ask, how shall we know when Christ doth thus respect us? Then truly, when fixing both the eyes of our meditation upon him that was pierced – as it were with one eye upon the grief, the other upon the love wherewith he was pierced, we find by both, or one of these, some motion of grace arise in our hearts, the consideration of his grief piercing our hearts with sorrow, the consideration of his love piercing our hearts with mutual love again.

'These have been felt at this looking on, and these will be felt. It may be at the first, imperfectly, but after with deeper impression; and that of some, with such as *nemo scit*, "none knoweth," but he that hath felt them.'

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